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CONTENTS

I. ARTICLES

1. The *Pratītyasamutpādagāthā* and Its Role in the Medieval Cult of the Relics, by *Daniel Boucher* 1
2. Notes on the Devotional Uses and Symbolic Functions of *Sūtra* Texts as Depicted in Early Chinese Buddhist Miracle Tales and Hagiographies, by *Robert F. Campany* 28
3. A Source Analysis of the *Ruijing lu* ("Records of Miraculous Scriptures"), by *Koichi Shinohara* 73
4. Pudgalavāda in Tibet? Assertions of Substantially Existent Selves in the Writings of Tsong-kha-pa and His Followers, by *Joe Bransford Wilson* 155

II. BOOK REVIEWS

1. *The Dawn of Chinese Pure Land Buddhist Doctrine: Ching-ying Hui-yüan's Commentary on the Visualization Sūtra*, by *Kenneth K. Tanaka* (Allan A. Andrews) 181
2. Three Recent Collections: *The Buddhist Heritage*, ed. Tadeusz Skorupski; *Chinese Buddhist Apocrypha*, ed. Robert E. Buswell, Jr.; and *Reflections on Tibetan Culture*, ed. Lawrence Epstein and Richard Sherburne (Roger Jackson) 191

LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS 195

Notes on the Devotional Uses and Symbolic Functions of *Sūtra* Texts as Depicted in Early Chinese Buddhist Miracle Tales and Hagiographies

by *Robert F. Campany*

In his magisterial study of the earliest period of Buddhism in China, Erik Zürcher observes that, in the types of source materials available to us, there is little mention of “popular” and “devotional” Buddhist practices. At one point, after describing the “metaphysical and philosophical problems and discussions” among Chinese Buddhist intellectuals in the late third and early fourth centuries C.E., Zürcher writes:

There was, of course, the devotional aspect. Not much is known about this side of early Chinese Buddhism. Simple faith and devotion may have played a great role in the popular cult about which hardly any information is available. Among the sophisticated Buddhist gentlemen of the fourth century, both monks and laymen, we very seldom hear emotional outbursts about the Buddha’s endless love and compassion.¹

Zürcher’s point is undeniable: written sources tell us much less than we would like to know about early Chinese Buddhist devotional practices both lay and monastic. Yet there do exist types of textual sources that, if read imaginatively, yield considerable insight into aspects of Buddhist life often neglected in favor of “metaphysical and philosophical discussions.”

The sources I will tap here are the earliest extant examples of two closely related Chinese narrative genres: Buddhist hagiographical or biographical accounts, and Buddhist “miracle tales,” each of them related in turn to the genre of “accounts

of the strange" (*zhiguai*^a), which was put to use by Buddhist as well as non-Buddhist authors.² The main hagiographical collection in question, the *Lives of Eminent Monks* (*Gaoseng zhuan*) of Huijiao (496–554 C.E.), features monks and was written by a monk.³ The miracle tales studied here—some 264 of them, all cited from pre-Tang (that is, pre-618) collections now mostly extant as fragments in encyclopaedias compiled in the seventh and in the tenth centuries—were written by laypersons; and, significantly, more than twice as many of these tales' protagonists are laypersons as are monks or nuns.⁴ Yet the hagiographical and miracle-tale genres are closely related: authors of each type of story are known to have drawn material from the other type, and both groups of authors probably gleaned material from other sources, such as mortuary inscriptions on *stūpas* and temple records.⁵

The questions I want to address here are two and, although distinct, closely interrelated: First, what can we learn from a careful reading of these sources about the various devotional uses to which Buddhist *sūtra* texts were put in China from the late third to the seventh centuries? Second, how was the *sūtra* text as such—the very physical object—used as a Buddhist symbol by the authors of these narratives?⁶

By the term "devotional uses" I mean to include all save the most scholastic, and hence most often studied, uses of *sūtra* texts. Familiar "modes of reception" such as translation, textual studies and lectures in monastic contexts, and the writing of commentaries are here deliberately excluded in favor of relatively "unstudied aspects" of the Chinese appropriation of *sūtras* imported from India via Central Asia and Indochina.⁷ The latter two phrases in inverted commas invoke exemplary attempts to chart this field: Miriam Levering has recently called for comparative studies of "modes of reception" of scriptures in various traditions, and has provided a fine example of the fruits comparative questions can yield when asked of Chinese Buddhism; while Jan Yün-hua has published on a largely "unstudied aspect" of Buddhist practice, namely "the power of recitation" of *sūtra* texts as reflected in the early Chinese hagiographies.⁸ While none can deny their importance, scholastic pursuits hardly exhaust the uses to which Chinese people of the early medieval period put *sūtra* texts or the range of ways

in which these sacred objects figured in the lives of monks, nuns, laymen and laywomen.

The first order of inquiry pursued here—that of the *sūtra* text as a *devotional* vehicle or object—looks through the texts to discern patterns of verbal, ritual, and gestural practice involving *sūtras* in the world in which the narrative texts were written. The second—that of the *sūtra* text as a *symbolic* vehicle or object—looks at the narrative texts themselves to see how they employ the *sūtra* as a literary symbol, a metonym for certain aspects of reality or of the world in which the narratives were created. In the first case, the “users” of *sūtra* texts are protagonists in the stories; in the second, the users are the authors of the texts themselves. Although most of the protagonists mentioned in the tales probably actually lived, and although we have documentation in other sources concerning some of them, their historicity is not at issue here. What is at issue is how these narratives reflect—and perhaps shaped—the place of Buddhist *sūtra* texts in the religious world of early medieval China.

I. Devotional Uses: Sūtra Texts as Vehicles and Objects of Reverent Action

1. Recitation

The devotional use of *sūtras* most ubiquitous in the narratives is their recitation: the repeated chanting of all or some of the words of the text. Many tales are careful to specify the number of times a protagonist recited a *sūtra*, ranging from hundreds to thousands to, at least in one case, ten thousand recitations.⁹ Others specify not the number of repetitions but the length of time spent in continuous recitation, ranging from several days to a month.¹⁰ Still others specify the number of words or syllables recited,¹¹ or the frequency and speed of recital.¹²

It must be noted at once that, with the exception of some hagiographies in the *Gaoseng zhuan* (especially those in the sections emphasized here, namely “Hymnodists” [*jingshi*^b], “Cantors” [*songjing*^c], and “Sermonists” [*changdao*^d]) which simply speak of the skills of a monk specializing in recitation, most stories involving *sūtra* recitation focus on cases in which this devotional act resulted in a miracle—a compassionate, salvific,

and clear intervention in human affairs by some powerful being, typically the *bodhisattva* or *buddha* on whom the *sūtra* focuses.¹³ This is true not only of the miracle tales but also of many of the hagiographies.

By far the most commonly mentioned text in such tales is that which now stands as the twenty-fifth (or twenty-fourth, depending on the version) chapter of the *Lotus Sūtra*, titled *Guanshiyin pusa pumenpin*^e (*Universal Gateway [to Salvation] of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara*).¹⁴ This chapter (at least its prose portion) was presumably translated into Chinese, along with the rest of the *Lotus*, at least six times between 286 and 601.¹⁵ It circulated in China as an independent *sūtra* text, and is often referred to as “the *Guanshiyin Sūtra*” (*Guanshiyin jing*^f).¹⁶ It depicts the Buddha as promising to anyone—even sinners—that if they, finding themselves in any of the types of extreme difficulty mentioned in the text, simply call upon the name of the *bodhisattva* Guanshiyin, they will be swiftly and miraculously rescued from danger by the *bodhisattva*’s great power.¹⁷ It is no surprise, then, that each of the Chinese stories of this type tells of a protagonist who, in dire straits and without means of escape, recites the *Guanshiyin jing* and is saved.¹⁸ In miracle stories involving recitation of the *Guanshiyin jing*, in other words, the effect of the recitation is almost always extrication from imminent peril.

For example, in chapter 25 of Kumārajīva’s translation of the *Lotus*, the Buddha declares: “Even if there is a man, whether guilty or guiltless, whose body is fettered with stocks, pillory, or chains, if he calls upon the name of the *bodhisattva* He Who Observes the Sounds of the World, they shall all be severed and broken, and he shall straightway gain deliverance.”¹⁹ The plots of at least thirteen miracle tales in the collections treated here are based squarely on this passage; Lu Gao’s collection alone contains eleven of these.²⁰ Here is an example:

Gai Hu was a native of Shanyang. Once he was imprisoned and was due to die. With a perfect mind he recited the *Guanshiyin Sūtra* for three days and three nights, without once relaxing his mind. Suddenly in the darkness he had a vision of Guanshiyin, whose emitted light shone upon him. At the same moment his chains and fetters fell off by themselves, the door

[to his cell] opened up, and Hu was released and taken out. He fled following the light to a point about twenty *li* away, where the light vanished. Hu hid the rest of the night in the brush, then continued his flight the next day and thus escaped.²¹

This story, like its counterparts, is replete with devotional language. The phrase “with a perfect mind” (*zhixing*), like other phrases found in these texts, such as “with utter concentration” (*zhinian^h*), “continuously” (*hengⁱ*), “single-mindedly” (*yixinⁱ*), and “exclusively” (*wei^k*), emphasizes the devotee’s total absorption in the act of recitation. Some such phrase is used in almost all the stories involving either the independent *Guanshiyin Sūtra* or the *Lotus* as a whole.²² This usage echoes the language of the *Guanshiyin Sūtra* itself, which several times repeats the admonition to “single-mindedly” (*yixin*) call upon the name of Guanshiyin when in distress. Furthermore, as noted above, it is common for these stories to mention the number of repetitions of the *sūtra* or the length of time spent in its recitation (here “three days and three nights”). In these ways the stories characterize a specific devotional attitude and mark the passage of devotional time.

Merely to list some of the other perils from which protagonists are saved in these tales is to document the pervasive extent to which the *bodhisattva* was thought to respond to recitations of “his” *sūtra*. (1) One story tells of “a Daoist wine libationer” who, though fifty years old, still had no son. At the suggestion of a Buddhist monk, he ceased “serving the Dao” and recited the *Guanshiyin Sūtra* with perfect sincerity, after which his wife bore him a son.²³ This and similar stories are harbingers of one of Guanyin’s most important religious functions in later Chinese history, the granting of sons and of safe childbirth to women.²⁴ (2) We have several accounts in which people, both monks and laypersons, recite the *sūtra* in order to escape shipwreck during a storm.²⁵ (3) The monk Shi Huijin is cured of illness—itsself brought on by exhaustion due to fervent recitation of the *Lotus*—by fulfilling his vow to recite a full one hundred chapters of the *sūtra*, undeterred by an attempted robbery during his unbroken recital.²⁶ (4) A mother and son separated by war are reunited after the mother constantly lights devotional lamps before an image of Guanshiyin and recites

his *sūtra*. The mysterious lights that lead the boy home through several nights behind enemy lines turn out to be miraculous manifestations of the lamps lit by his mother many miles away.²⁷ A similar story is told in the same collection of a father and son.²⁸ (5) There are several accounts of people saved from attack by bandits, robbers, or cannibalistic barbarians by reciting the *Guanshiyin Sūtra*.²⁹ (6) People are said to have miraculously escaped fire by reciting the *sūtra*.³⁰ (7) The monk Tan Wujie and his disciples, on a pilgrimage in quest of scriptures, are miraculously saved from attack by mountain elephants and wild buffalo when he recites the *Guanshiyin Sūtra*, calls on the name of the *bodhisattva*, and entrusts their lives to him.³¹

Authors and collectors of such stories about the efficacy of reciting the *Guanshiyin Sūtra* apparently fashioned them quite self-consciously to authenticate the *sūtra*'s claims for itself. In fact, the authentication worked in two directions at once: on the one hand, the records of actual miraculous events—which unfailingly specify the names of the individuals involved and often their place of origin and the date of the event—confirm the efficacy of recital. On the other hand, the events described in the tales are authenticated *as* miracles and their true significance located by reference to the *sūtra*; they are imbued with a specific religious meaning and are thus distinguished from a mere list of anomalies. Hence we find authors occasionally citing specific passages from the *sūtra* in order to link them to the miraculous event narrated.³² And Lu Gao explicitly organized his tales under eleven rubrics quoted directly from the *Guanshiyin Sūtra* and from another early text on Guanyin, the *Qing Guanshiyin pusa xiaofu duhai tuoluoni zhou jing*¹ (*Sūtra of Dhāraṇī Incantations for Imploring the Bodhisattva Guanshiyin to Dissolve and Subdue Maleficent Phenomena*).³³

While a full discussion cannot be given here, it should be mentioned that the miracle tales and hagiographies contain many examples of other *sūtras* being recited in order to gain relief from difficulty. In time of drought, for instance, powerful monks are shown performing *dhāraṇī* incantations and reciting the *Hailongwang jing*^m (*Sūtra on the Oceanic Dragon Kings, Sāgaran-āgarājaparipṛcchā-sūtra*, T 598); the recital causes the serpentine creatures (Chin. *long*ⁿ, Skt. *nāga*) who control rain to appear, form clouds, and release atmospheric moisture.³⁴ Other stories

tell of extraordinary responses elicited by *sūtra* recitals in funerary contexts on behalf of the dead.³⁵ Still others describe *sūtra* recitals for the purpose of driving off demons and ghosts.³⁶

2. Collection, Preservation, and Display: *Sūtra as Sacred Commodity*

Some stories yield a vivid sense of the extent to which *sūtras* were appropriated as objects of special value—that is, as commodities, objects cherished within an ideological regime of value and circulated within a social matrix of exchange—in early medieval China.³⁷ We read, first of all, of distinct sites for the storage, display, and veneration of *sūtra* texts: one story tells of how a “*sūtra* hall” and adjacent “thatch *vihāra*” were miraculously spared from a fire that decimated the Wuxing commandery capital; another tells of a solitary monk in Jingzhou who had three separate chambers, one for images, one for *sūtras*, and one for his own occupancy.³⁸

The following two stories—linked by their compiler apparently because of the similarity between them—afford a glimpse of how particular copies of *sūtras* acquired the status of family treasures:

Zhou Min, a native of Runan, lived during the Jin dynasty and served as an officer of the guard. His family had observed the Dharma for generations. During Sun Jun’s rebellion [ca. 328 C.E.] people were rushing about wildly in the capital. Min’s family had a copy of the *Mahā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra* written on the back of an eight-*zhang*-long piece of plain white silk.³⁹ In addition they had several shelves full of other *sūtras*, and the *Mahā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra* was somewhere among them. At the moment when they were about to flee the troubles in the capital they had to travel lightly and couldn’t take everything; but, although they especially regretted leaving behind the *Mahā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*, they didn’t know which shelf it was on. Time had run out and [Min] was pacing about anxiously, when suddenly this text emerged of itself, and, shocked and pleased, Min took it and fled. The Zhou family has treasured this text for generations, and it is said to be still extant.

Another story goes as follows: Zhou Gao’s wife was of the Humu clan. They owned a copy of the *Mahā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra* written on a strip of ordinary white silk. Although the silk strip

was only five *cun* wide, the entirety of the *sūtra* was contained on it. They also had a relic (*sheli*^o) which was kept in a silver vase. Both [*sūtra* and relic] were stored inside a deep chest. During the *yongjia* troubles, when the Humu clan was about to leave hastily to head south and escape the advancing troops,⁴⁰ both the *sūtra* and the relic emerged of themselves from the chest; so the family took them across the Yangzi River, hiding them beneath their garments. On another occasion this family suffered a devastating fire, in which everything was totally destroyed; but the *sūtra* and relic were found unscathed among the ashes. Wang Daozi of Kuaiji once visited Gao and asked for permission to make an offering to [these objects]; they met again later at Xinzhu Temple. Liu Jingshu said he once saw this *sūtra* himself: its characters were no bigger than sesame seeds and had been inscribed with extreme skill. This Xinzhu Temple is now known as Tianan [Temple]. This *sūtra* text was probably inscribed by the monk Shi Huize. Some maintain that it was once read at the Jianjing Temple by the nun Jingshou.⁴¹

We note, first of all, the rare nature of these texts, which made them all the more valuable: the first was gigantic, measuring some eighty feet in length; the second was miniature, measuring only six inches or so in width. Then there are the histories of the two texts: each takes on a sort of “biography” interwoven with the vicissitudes of the family which owns it and punctuated by the notable people who have come into contact with it.⁴² The link of ownership is symbolized by the texts’ miraculous emergence when their owners are about to flee. Thirdly, we note in the second story the request to make offerings to the text and relic—a clear indication of the fact that they both served as vehicles of the Buddha’s (or perhaps a *bodhisattva*’s) presence. Indeed, although offerings to *sūtra* texts as acts of merit do not figure prominently in the pre-Tang miracle tales, they are certainly implied in these tales of careful collection and reverent preservation. Offerings to *sūtras* would assume greater importance in Tang tales, in which acts ranging from the simple joining of one’s palms in reverence to the burning of a finger or of one’s whole body—all understood as offerings to a *sūtra* (most often the *Lotus*)—are pictured as supremely meritorious.⁴³ Finally, it is striking that no one in either of the families is said to have read the texts. The protagonists are

described—by an author clearly sympathetic with, and desirous of promoting, the practices he depicts—as owning the texts, and storing them on a shelf or in a chest, but not reading them or discussing their contents. Of course this does not prove that reading *sūtra* texts for meaning was unimportant even in lower-ranking lay circles; we know that *sūtras* such as the *Vimalakīrti* were virtually required reading among the learned aristocracy during these centuries. But it does suggest that reading was not the only—and perhaps was not even the major—purpose for which *sūtras* were used. We are dealing with a world in which the very ownership of certain texts is of great religious significance, a point to which I shall return in the conclusion.

That the ownership and display of *sūtra* texts were important sources of merit, capable of stimulating miraculous “responses,” can be seen from the story of Wang Yi. While still a young cavalry officer, Wang was once miraculously led across a swollen river by a mysterious white wolf which appeared when he and his family, “having reached the point of utter hopelessness,” placed all their trust in the Three Treasures. After narrating this event, the story continues:

Later Wang Yi became a minister in the Ministry of War [under the Jin dynasty] and served as Regional Inspector of Xuzhou. Once when he was intending to serve a vegetarian feast, and so had swept and washed his home, set out incense and flowers, and displayed an abundance of *sūtra* texts and images, he suddenly heard the sound of pure and melodious *sūtra* reciting coming from the Dharma-hall (*fatang*^P) in his home. When he went there to look, he saw five *śramaṇas* in front of the Buddha-seat (*fōzuo*^Q), of dignified yet unusual appearance, radiating an air of spiritual attainment. Yi knew these were no ordinary monks (*fanseng*^r), and his heart was filled with joyful surprise. The *śramaṇas* looked up from their recitations but continued on; and then, while they were still chanting, they suddenly flew up into the sky and departed. Counting all the family members, guests, and friends who were present, there were many who saw this; and all of them danced gleefully and redoubled their efforts toward faith and enlightenment (*MXJ* 43 [LX 480]; cf. *FYZL* 65 [785b–c]).

This tale of a layman ritually purifying his home and proudly displaying the *sūtras* owned by his family, along with images, in a "Dharma-hall," clearly signals that to collect and revere Buddhist texts was itself thought to advance one on the path "toward faith and enlightenment."

Finally, the value of creating and acquiring these precious commodities is stressed in stories of miracles attending their translation, copying, and transmission, as well as accounts of pilgrimages in search of texts.⁴⁴ Some of the most famous Chinese Buddhist literature narrates the arduous quest for scriptures—a motif most fully explored in the well known sixteenth century novel, *The Journey to the West*.⁴⁵

This attachment of religious value to the sheer ownership of texts should come as no surprise to anyone acquainted with the *sūtras* themselves, which are known for promising their owners, copiers, transmitters, readers, and hearers untold spiritual and bodily benefits. What the tales usefully illuminate is the great extent to which, and the early period in which, these promises became part of Chinese religious literature.

3. *Texts Worn on the Body: The Sūtra as Amulet*

I have found one instance—unusual in extant Buddhist texts of this period and genre—in which the protagonist of a tale is described as wearing a *sūtra* text on his very person. Knowing that the reciting, owning, and displaying of *sūtras* were viewed as acts capable of eliciting miraculous responses, it should not surprise us to learn that *sūtras* could be thus treated as virtual amulets and, like images or relics, worn on the head or at the neck. The story runs as follows:

Xing Huaiming, a native of Hejian, served as Adjutant to the Major General under the Song during the *luanjia* period [424–453 C.E.]. He participated in the northern campaign led by the Regional Inspector of Jingzhou, Zhu Mingzhi, whose forces were defeated. Xing and others were captured alive by the enemy.⁴⁶ But, with a handful of compatriots, he managed to escape. For three days they traveled by night and hid during the day. Even so they feared being pursued and recaptured, so they sent one man ahead to scout for enemies, and this man did not return for several days. Then one dark and rainy night this man

suddenly came back. On arriving he said in surprise: “As I approached I could see very plainly the bright light of a fire, so I came this way; how is it that when I arrive I find it completely dark here?” The group marveled at this and could find no explanation for it. Now Huaiming had previously venerated the Dharma; and throughout the campaign he continuously carried the *Guanshiyin jing* on top of his head, and recited it without ceasing. Furthermore, he had been reciting it that very night, so everyone suspected that [this anomaly] was due to the divine power of the *sūtra*. With that they all developed prayerful hearts, and after they had escaped they resided in a monastery.⁴⁷

All extant versions of this story are careful to say that the protagonist not only wore the *sūtra* on his head but also recited it. One version adds that he not only wore and recited it but, while doing so, “was extremely diligent in fixing his thoughts” (*cunnian*^s), a term used, in texts of this period, to designate both “concentration” (in this case almost certainly on the *bodhisattva* Guanshiyin) and “visualization.” These details suggest that the authors understood the *sūtra* to have been used not simply as an amulet, the very words of which were by themselves efficacious, but (also?) as a physical and symbolic vehicle for sustaining a level of mindfulness sufficient to elicit a response from Guanshiyin. That the *sūtra* was worn on the head strongly suggests that here, too, the text functioned as the symbolic equivalent of the *bodhisattva* or of his image; for there survive several tales of images of Guanshiyin worn on the head or at the neck for protection against the swords of robbers and executioners,⁴⁸ and this seems only fitting since the *bodhisattva* himself was both artistically represented and meditatively visualized—both in India and in China—as wearing a figurine or transformation-body of the Buddha in his own headdress.⁴⁹ Here, then, as we have seen and will see again, the *sūtra* text performs a double religious function: on the one hand it is thought of as a vehicle which can be used to make a *bodhisattva* or *buddha* present; on the other hand, more radically, it stands in the place of, and (functionally speaking) *is*, a *bodhisattva* or *buddha*.

Now the Chinese locution which I here translate as “he continuously carried the *Guanshiyin jing* on top of his head” is quite literal and leaves little doubt as to its meaning.⁵⁰ How-

ever, Gregory Schopen's remarks on a somewhat similar *Diamond Sūtra* passage raise an interpretive problem which, for our purposes, is important but insoluble at this stage of research. He translates the relevant *Vajracchedikā* passage as follows: "Those who will take up this discourse on Doctrine, will preserve it, will declare it, will recite it, will master it . . . , all those living beings will carry my awakening on their shoulder."⁵¹ Citing similar passages from other Sanskrit Mahāyāna texts, Schopen suggests that some should be taken only figuratively and not literally, since the key phrase in most cases, *śīrasā pratigṛhṇāti*, commonly means "to receive, accept . . . 'with the head'; i.e. 'humbly, obediently.'" However, he also finds cases in which a figurative reading is almost certainly impossible, and in which a person is clearly said to carry a scriptural text on the head or shoulders. Since two of the passages Schopen cites are from a Sanskrit edition of the *Lotus Sūtra*, let us look more closely at cognate expressions in Kumārajīva's Chinese translation.

So far I have found three occurrences of the term *dingshou*⁴, literally "to receive on the crown of the head," apparently a translation of the Sanskrit *śīrasā pratigṛhṇāti*. In each case the term is used to describe the reverential attitude with which a Buddhist seeker should treat the *sūtra*:

If there is a listener / Who with due rejoicing receives it [i.e., the 'Dharma-seal' (*fayin*¹¹), that is, the scripture] upon the crown of his head [*dingshou*] . . .

. . . seeks the Dharma in all four directions, / With joined palms receiving it on the crown of his head [*hezhang*^v *dingshou*] . . .

As a man wholeheartedly / Seeks the Buddhaśarīra, / So may one seek the scriptures / And, having found them, receive them on the crown of one's head [*deyi*^w *dingshou*] . . .⁵²

It now seems impossible to tell whether these canonical prescriptions were originally intended literally or figuratively; the text as it stands is vague. For our purposes, however, two things are clear: for early medieval Chinese readers and hearers, the phrase *dingshou* could have been understood literally, since it is not obviously or exclusively metaphoric; and receiving the *sūtra* is made tantamount to receiving the Dharma in the second

passage and, in the third passage, to receiving Buddha relics—further evidence of the sorts of functional equivalences that have been noted above.

Furthermore, there are parallel passages in the *Lotus*. The much less figurative term *dingdai*^x occurs at least twice and clearly (despite Hurvitz's translation of the first occurrence) indicates carrying on the head: in the first case carrying the Buddha on one's head as an offering to him, and in the second case reciting and cherishing the *Lotus* as equivalent to carrying the Buddha himself on one's head.

The World-Honored One in his great lovingkindness /
Uses a rare thing... / To afford us profit. In incalculable mil-
lions of *kalpas* / Who could repay this? / Were he to sacrifice
his hands and feet, / Do obeisance with his head bowed, / And
make sundry offerings, / No one could repay this. / Were one
to receive him on the crown of one's head, / Carry him on both
shoulders [*ruoyi dingdai, liangjian hefu*]...

If after the extinction of the Thus Come One anyone hears
this scripture and without maligning it raises up thoughts of
appropriate joy, be it known that this is a mark of his having
already achieved profound faith and understanding. How much
truer is this of one who reads and recites, accepts and keeps it!
For such a man thereby carries the Thus Come One on his head
[*hekuang dusong shouchi zhi zhe, siren ze wei dingdai rulai*].⁵³

The upshot of these passages is that the translated *Lotus* gave its Chinese audience vague yet undeniable precedent for wearing or carrying *sūtras*, images, and relics on the head or shoulders. Seen in this light, the story of Xing Huaiming does not seem so strange. Another story translated below (p. 49) describes a man as tying a *sūtra* to his head while fording a stream. Although one easily assumes he did so simply to protect his precious commodity from water damage, these precedents suggest that he might also be seen as having done so to protect himself.

4. *Inviolable Texts: Miraculous Punishment for Desecration of Sūtras*

The efficacy and sacrality attributed to *sūtras* can be seen as well in negative terms, that is, in stories about people who

receive extraordinary punishment for abusing or desecrating texts. For if *sūtra* texts are depicted as objectified commodities in the stories, they are no ordinary commodities: the stories tacitly argue through didactic narrative that they deserve the respect and veneration one would offer to the Buddha or to a *bodhisattva*, and to desecrate them has the same effect as desecrating a Buddha-image or slandering the Buddhist teaching. Here is an example:

The Song Dynasty nun Shi Zhitong belonged to the Jianjing Nunnery in the capital.⁵⁴ She was young and beautiful, and her faith in the path was not very deep. In the ninth year of the *yuanjia* period [432 C.E.] her superior died and she left the path and was married to one Liang Qunfu of Wei Commandery. She gave birth to a son. When he was seven years (*sui*) old the family was extremely poor, and she had no materials to make clothing from. While Zhitong was a nun she had obtained several rolls of *sūtra* texts on plain silk, including the *Wuliangshou*^{aa} [*Sukhāvativyūha*], the *Lotus*, and others. She now sewed these together to make clothes for her son.

A year later she grew sick, and she was terrified because her body was covered with places where the skin had been torn off and scalded as though she had been burned by fire. Moreover there were tiny white worms that multiplied on her daily and caused excruciating pain, so that she howled day and night. She often heard a voice in midair saying: “It is for ruining *sūtra* texts to make clothing that you are receiving this severe retribution.” In a little over a week she died (*MXJ* 82 [LX 505]; *FYZL* 18 [418c]; *TPGJ* 116.2).

In such stories, it is the sheer extraordinariness of the “response” to the crime—here the unusual nature of the former nun’s affliction—that marks it, for the protagonist and for the reader, as a punishment and not simply a coincidentally contracted disease. As if to dispel any lingering doubt on the reader’s part, this story indubitably confirms her condition by means of a clear message delivered by “a voice in midair.”

Another such confirmatory device used in the stories is the notation of things that should have happened but, quite strikingly, didn’t—events conspicuous by their absence. Here is one such story, intriguing for its depiction of struggle between Buddhist and Daoist adherents at the local level:

Liu Ling lived during the Song Dynasty; his family's native place is not known. He lived in Lucheng village to the east of Jinling. He was rather observant of the Dharma, and established in his home a *vihāra* (*jingshe*^{ab}) where from time to time he hosted vegetarian feasts and other gatherings. On the 27th day of the third month of the ninth year of the *yuanjia* period [432 C.E.], his father died suddenly of illness. A shaman (*wu*^{ac}) and an invocator of spirits (*zhu*^{ad}) both warned that his family would soon experience three more deaths.

Now in a neighboring family there was a Daoist libation master (*daoshi jijiu*^{ae}) named Wei Po who was always making amulets and talismans (*zhangfu*^{af}) and deluding the people of the village. He told Ling: "The tragedies due to befall your family are not yet over, and it is all because you have served a barbarian deity (*hushen*^{ag}). If instead you serve the Great Dao, you will surely receive blessings; but if you do not change your ways, your whole family will be exterminated." So Ling began to perform wine libations and no longer observed the Dharma. Po then instructed him further: "If you burn your *sūtra* texts and images, as is proper, then the calamities will be avoided." So Ling closed up his *vihāra* and set it afire. It burned for several days, but only the room itself was destroyed; the *sūtra* texts, images, banners, and painted scrolls⁵⁵ were completely intact, and the images gave off a bright glow at night.⁵⁶

At that time there were more than twenty wine-libationers in the area, and many of them, awed and cowed by this efficacious manifestation (*lingyan*^{ah}), snuck away. But Po and his closest disciples were not to be deterred. He tied up his hair and performed the Paces of Yu,⁵⁷ and, brandishing a sword, commanded the Buddha to return to his barbarian country (*huguo*^{ai}) and forbade him to remain in China and continue harming its people. That same night Ling felt as if someone were hitting him, and he fell to the floor. When family members lifted him up he still seemed to be breathing, but then he went motionless. As for the Daoist master Wei Po, the insides of his body developed ulcers at that same time, which multiplied quickly, and within a month he had died a painful death. All of his compatriots also grew ill.

One of [Liu Ling's] neighbors, Sui Qiuhe, the Governor of Dongan, transmitted this story in good faith [to me?] at Dongyang; and there were also many witnesses (*MXJ* 85 [LX 507]; *FYZL* 62 [760c]).

In the ordinary scheme of things, objects made of fabric—such as *sūtra* scrolls, banners, and canopies—would naturally be the first to burn in a fire, certainly in a fire lasting three days. So the fact that these, along with Buddhist images (made of wood or metal), were the only objects to survive points to the superior power of that which they jointly symbolize or, to speak more accurately, embody.⁵⁸ Extra confirmatory touches are added by the simultaneity of the layman Ling's mysterious death and the Daoist libationer's ulcer attack, as well as by the closing mention of eyewitnesses, one of whom the author seemingly claims to have contacted personally.

For our purposes, the message of such stories is clear: *sūtra* texts embody the beings whom they describe and whose words they contain; to harm the texts is to harm the beings and to incur the karmic retribution appropriate to such a heinous act.⁵⁹ Once more, as I remarked earlier in discussing the story of Xing Huaiming, there are parallel stories involving images: a person first maligns, destroys, steals, or alters an image, often while openly mocking the Buddhist teachings; then, inevitably, the mocker gets his or her karmic desserts. And again, as noted above, such accounts of retribution for desecration of *sūtra* texts are in direct agreement with some (at least) of the *sūtras* themselves: the *Lotus*, to cite perhaps the most famous example, threatens those who malign its own reciters with a punishment more grave than that meted out to maligners of the Buddha himself,⁶⁰ and it constantly equates itself as a text with the presence—indeed the very body—of the Buddha.⁶¹ The Buddha, his teaching, Buddha images, and *sūtra* texts: all seem to have been regarded—or at least were represented—as functionally interchangeable; and they were thus represented not simply in translated *sūtra* texts themselves but also in indigenous Chinese stories about *sūtra* texts from at least as early as the first half of the fifth century.

II. Literary Uses: The Sūtra Text as Symbol

Until now I have attempted to peer through the tales in order to glimpse ways in which *sūtras* were represented, at least, as having been religiously appropriated in the social world

reflected there. I do not, and need not, claim that each narrated event actually occurred as reported in a particular tale, but simply that the tale corpus as a whole can be taken seriously as a record of types or patterns of devotional practice that made sense and possibly were followed in the society in which they were written. Ultimately the probability of this claim rests on the nature of the genre itself: these tales are obviously designed to argue the benefits of certain actions and behaviors regarding *sūtra* texts, and in order for the tales to have served this purpose the actions and behaviors they describe would have to have been intelligible and familiar to readers, even if their alleged miraculous results were deemed incredible.

But such a study as this would remain incomplete without some consideration of the roles played by *sūtra* texts in the stories themselves taken as narrative texts. For, obviously, no story is an empty, neutral container of messages; as a medium it necessarily and profoundly shapes whatever messages it conveys. The question to which I now turn, then, is that of the literary role of *sūtras* as objects, symbols, perhaps even actors in these narratives. In pondering this question I will select as examples tales other than the ones already discussed, although it should be clear that the role of the *sūtra* in any of those tales could also be analyzed here.

1. *Miraculous Sūtra Recitals by Women as Symbols for the Revelatory Transmission of Dharma*

I begin with a pair of stories in which it is not the result of reciting a *sūtra*, but the very fact of recital under certain circumstances, that is presented as miraculous. Consider the following example:

During the *jian'an* period of the Jin dynasty,⁶² Ding Cheng (courtesy name Deshen), a native of Jiying, served as District Magistrate of Ningyin. At that time the peasant women on the northern boundary [of the district] were going to an outside well to draw their water. A Westerner (*huren^{ai}*) with a long nose and deep-set eyes came by the well and begged one of the women for a drink of water. When he had drunk it, he suddenly disappeared. The woman began having pains in her belly,

which grew more and more intense. She shouted, then suddenly stood up and began speaking Western language (*huyu^{ak}*) and pointing at the banners (*hui^{al}*).⁶³ Several dozen families gathered in the town to watch her. She then called for paper and a brush, as if intending to write. When she got a brush she at once wrote in Western script (*hushu^{am}*): the text she wrote ran horizontally, some characters looking like an *yi^{an}*, others like a *ji^{ao}* [that is, like Sanskrit]. After thus filling up five sheets of paper, she spread them on the ground and told the bystanders to read this script. In the town there was no one who could read it. But there was a certain young boy, perhaps ten years old, whom the woman pointed out, saying he could read it. When he was given the script, he at once read it aloud in Western speech (*huyu^{ap}*), and the onlookers were shocked, not knowing what to make of it. Then the woman told the boy to dance, and he got up and moved his feet quickly about as his hands swayed in mutual harmony.⁶⁴ In a little while they both stopped.

All of this was then reported to [the magistrate] Deshen, who summoned the woman and boy and questioned them. They both said that at the time [of these events] they had suddenly become unaware of themselves. Deshen wanted to confirm the reality of this event (*yan qi shi^{aq}*), so he sent a messenger to carry the text to Xuxia Monastery and show it to an old Westerner (*jiuhu^{ar}*) there. The Westerner was greatly surprised, saying the text was a missing piece of a Buddhist *sūtra*, and that, since the way [to India] was long, he had despaired of ever getting it; although he had been able to recite it orally, this was not sufficient. Since this script was precisely the [missing] text, it was left behind so that it could be copied (*MXJ* 36 [LX 477]; *FYZZL* 18 [417a–b]).

It is the triple identity of the *sūtra* transcriber in this story as a peasant, a woman, and an illiterate that forces the reader to see the *sūtra*'s transmission to her as an extraordinary event. The *sūtra*, along with the Dharma it contains, is thus represented as something that can be transmitted by revelation or possession, much as Daoist texts were represented during the same period. The foreignness of the text, of its mysterious carrier, of its script, of the sounds attached to that script, and of the old monk who confirms it as a missing segment of a *sūtra*—all emphasized by the fivefold repetition of the term *hu*, designating a foreign person or thing of Western (typically Indian) ori-

gin—only underscores that its transmission to an ordinary Chinese peasant woman is nothing short of miraculous. And that transmission in turn suggests something about what *sūtras* essentially are: their words are no mere contingent representations of truth but are themselves indissolubly bound up with its fabric, and are communicable across boundaries of class, language, literacy, gender, and culture.

We might compare this with another story, in which the father, son, and daughter of a family are diligent in following the Dharma but the mother remains trapped in darkness. The fourteen year-old girl dies of illness. She returns to life after seven days with instructions for her family: they are to set up a “high seat” (*gaozuo*^{as}, on which more below) and place a copy of the *Wuliangshou jing* (*Sukhāvativyūha Sūtra*) upon it. This done, the girl, who although she had kept the precepts and done her devotions had never once in her life looked at a *sūtra* text, ascends the high seat and recites the *sūtra* with a clear, resonant voice. She then declares that she herself, her father, and her elder brother upon death will all go to Amitābha’s land to be reborn there; but her mother will not escape punishment, and so she has returned to warn them. Having delivered this pronouncement, the girl expires again. Her mother from now on believes in the Dharma.⁶⁵ This story is similar in structure to the one just examined. Here, too, a *sūtra* is transmitted across a gap—another case of transmission by revelation. Here, it is the ability to recite clearly that symbolizes the reality of the protagonist’s contact with Buddhist truth and of the Pure Land; there, it was the ability to write Sanskrit. Here, the gap spanned by the revelation is that between life and death; there, it was that between India and China; both are bridgeable gaps, and the bridging in each case symbolizes the ultimate reality and the authority of the Buddhist teaching, as well as the skill with which it is transmitted. Both stories end with a confirmatory device: here, it is the real effect on the mother that confirms the revelation as genuine, as there, it was the old Westerner’s recognition of the automatically written text as an authentic missing part of a *sūtra*. In both cases, the action revolves around a female protagonist who lacked any previous experience reading or copying *sūtras*, and it is this lack that gives the stories their power.⁶⁶

2. Sūtras as Symbols and Embodiments of the Bodhisattva's Responsive Compassion

Earlier, I considered stories in which *sūtras* are somehow or other involved as vehicles for rendering the Buddha or a *bodhisattva* present. But there are also stories in which *sūtras* are not represented as devotional vehicles but are symbols for—perhaps replacements of—the personal response of a *bodhisattva* to a human act of merit or a mind of faith. In one such story, for instance, the pious people of a certain city, under threat of an attack by a barbarian commander, together concentrate on Guanshiyin. As a response, a copy of the *Guanshiyin Sūtra* suddenly descends from the sky before the commander, who in his joy at its teaching pardons the city.⁶⁷ In another story, a lay official imprisoned by enemies meditates on Guanshiyin, then dreams that he ascends a high seat (*gaozuo*) and receives from a monk a *sūtra* listing the names of certain *bodhisattvas*. Upon awakening from his dream, he finds his fetters loose. Three days later, he is pardoned and released.⁶⁸ In this type of story, *sūtras* seem to respond as the *bodhisattva* would, and their appearance functions in the narratives precisely as the appearance of Guanshiyin does in other stories.

Here are two stories in which this motif of “*sūtra* as miraculous response” is expanded upon.

Zhou Dang lived during the Jin dynasty and was a native of Yan in Kuaiji. His family had observed the Dharma for generations. When Dang was sixteen years old he began eating only vegetarian food and keeping the other dietary restrictions. He also became skilled in chanting, after which he learned to recite *sūtras*. He kept the first month Long Fast and sponsored Eightfold Fasts to which he invited monks as his guests.⁶⁹

On one of these occasions he went to Xiangshi Monastery and requested the senior monk there, Zhu Sengmi, along with Zhi Fakai and Zhu Fomi, to come to his home and recite the *Smaller Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra* during the fast days.⁷⁰ When the day arrived, the three monks proceeded to the meal but forgot to take the *sūtra*. Only when they had finished the noon meal and wanted to begin the recitation did they realize that they had forgotten it, to their great regret. Dang's home was in the village of Banyi, thirty *li* away from the monastery, and there was no one to send back after it. People had even started to light

incense and pray, but the [Zhou] family members could only regret not having the *sūtra*, and [Zhu Seng]mi for his part paced about nervously. Just then someone knocked on the door, saying they had brought the *sūtra*. Dang was surprised and delighted. Opening the door, he saw a robed youth whom he had never seen before and who did not behave quite like an ordinary human being. Suspecting a miracle (*shenyi*^{at}), he prostrated himself to receive the *sūtra*, hoping that [the youth] would enter and be seated. But the youth did not enter, saying he would return that night to listen to the *sūtra*. When the guest monks went out [to see him], he suddenly disappeared, leaving behind a fragrance that filled the whole house. When they looked closely at the *sūtra*, it turned out to be [Zhu Seng]mi's copy, at which the monks and laity present were both surprised and delighted.

The *sūtra* had been securely stored in a locked chest within a storeroom [at the monastery]; but when the monks, having returned, inspected the lock, it was perfectly intact.

More than ten families in the village professed [faith in] the Buddha because of this, and their love and respect for Dang increased. Dang, for his part, left the household to become a monk, taking the [Dharma-]name Tanyi and reciting many *sūtras* amounting to 200,000 syllables (*MXJ* 24 [LX 469–70]; *FYZL* 18 [417c–418a]; *TPGJ* 110.2).

Dong Ji of the Jin Dynasty was a native of Yuqian. His family had observed Dharma for three generations, so by Ji's time they were particularly zealous. He constantly adhered to the dietary rules and precepts, and recited the *Shoulengyan jing*^{au} (*Sūraṃgama [samādhi] sūtra*). Whenever anyone in his village was sick, they would ask him to recite the *sūtra*; and of those he went to help, many were cured.

In the same district lived another layman named He Huang. During the *xianhe* period [327–334 C.E.] this man contracted an illness and was quarantined. Huang's older brother worriedly sped to request Ji's aid. The homes of the Dong and the He families were 60 or 70 *li* apart, and were, furthermore, separated by a large stream; and it was now the fifth month, when heavy rainfalls had begun. When Huang's brother first crossed the stream, the high waters had not yet arrived. Ji, after taking his noon meal, set out with him; but by now the waters had flowed down from the mountains and the stream was unfordable, and Ji couldn't swim. He paced back and forth

impatiently, then sat on the bank for a long while, wanting to continue the journey but not daring to attempt to cross. Now Ji was upright in his faith and longed to go on, so he conceived of the following thought, which he declared aloud: "In saving others from difficulty, I take no thought for my own safety. I entrust myself to the Tathāgata Mahāsattva (*rulai dashi^{av}*), that he may look upon me and prove reliable." He then took off his clothes and used them to fasten the *sūtra* text and its enclosing bookbag to the top of his head (*bian tuoyi yi nangjing daizhi toushang^{aw}*), whereupon [they both] ventured into the stream. The water was neck high, but when Ji went across it only came up to his knees.

But when they reached the other shore they were dismayed to find that the *sūtra* text and the bookbag had been lost. They proceeded on to Huang's home, where Ji apologized profusely and tearfully blamed himself. Glancing upward, he saw the *sūtra* in the bookbag on the high seat (*gaozuo^{ax}*). Joyfully taking it down and examining it, he found that the bookbag was damp as if it had been dropped in water. But when he opened the bookbag and looked at the *sūtra*, he found it was dry as usual. Upon hearing this, everyone in the village undertook to observe the Dharma....⁷¹

In this latter story we not only see another example of the placing of a *sūtra* text atop the head, a matter discussed earlier. We also encounter a third instance in which a *sūtra* text is described as being placed—or else miraculously appearing—on a "high seat" (*gaozuo*). I summarized above the story of a girl who temporarily returns from death with instructions for her family to set up a *gaozuo* and place a *sūtra* on it; after the family does so, the girl ascends this seat, reads and expounds the *sūtra*, and delivers a final warning to her mother. I also mentioned the story of an imprisoned official who, having meditated on Guanshiyin, dreams of ascending a *gaozuo* and receiving a *sūtra* there, after which he is pardoned and freed. In the story just translated, the protagonist, having lost his *sūtra* and its enclosing bag in the stream, discovers that it has been mysteriously transported to the *gaozuo* in his client's home. In each of these stories, both the *gaozuo* and the text expounded from it or received upon it become symbols of the Dharma and its authority. When a *sūtra* appears or is placed on the high seat, it is, symbolically speaking, restored to its proper place of eminence

and also to the place from which it can effectively influence beings, no longer merely a latent but now an activated force for transformation.

According to standard reference works, a *gaozuo* was an elevated seat or platform on which a teacher sat and expounded the Dharma by reading and commenting on a scriptural text.⁷² Although this term does not appear in Johannes Prip-Møller's classic account of Chinese monasteries, Prip-Møller does describe elevated lecture platforms with decorated seats for lecturers and tables for the *sūtra* texts. He also describes the ceremonies preceding a lecture: the *sūtra* to be expounded, covered with embroidered silk, is carried into the lecture hall on a tray with incense, then placed on the elevated table and uncovered after the lecturer has thrice raised the incense to his forehead as a sign of veneration.⁷³ Such practices may have been part of the context in which our stories were written. But there were also canonical precedents for ritually venerating the Dharma by venerating the *gaozuo* from which it was expounded, and for symbolically linking together the preacher, his seat, and his *sūtra* text as mutually embodying and conveying the Buddhadharma.

Toward the end of Lokakṣema's second-century translation of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā prajñāpāramitā sūtra*, for example, much attention is paid to the *gaozuo* on which the *bodhisattva* Dharmodgata (Tanwujie) expounds the Dharma in his city of Gandhavati.⁷⁴ The people of the city built it for him, setting it on a base of gold, adorning it with precious fabrics, covering it with a bejeweled canopy, and surrounding it with strewn flowers. "The *bodhisattva* Dharmodgata, from atop this high seat, often expounds *prajñāpāramitā* for the various *bodhisattvas* there, among whom there are those who hear it, those who write it, those who study it, those who recite it, and those who guard it."⁷⁵ Later we read of a bejeweled, pointed tower, apparently built near or over Dharmodgata's high seat,

constructed . . . for the perfection of wisdom. Inside it is a box made of purple stone⁷⁶ and yellow gold, and inside that box is written the perfection of wisdom. The box [also] contains many varieties of precious fragrances. The *bodhisattva* Dharmodgata daily makes offerings: taking the various flowers, incense, lamps, hangings, banners, streamers, jewels from the

canopy, and music—taking all of these, he offers them to the perfection of wisdom. And the other *bodhisattvas* there make offerings to the perfection of wisdom in the same manner as this.⁷⁷

This passage is significant for our purposes because it suggests, through architectural symbolism, a conflation of the high seat, site of the exposition of Dharma and thus often a depository for *sūtras*, and the *stūpa* (suggested by “pointed tower”), a depository for relics. Here then is another, and quite graphic, canonical precedent for the equivalence of Buddha and *sūtra* and for the association of both with the high seat.

This passage from the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā sūtra* in turn is reminiscent of the eleventh chapter of the *Lotus*, in which a jeweled *stūpa*, adorned with precious objects and containing “a thousand myriads of grotto-like rooms,” wells up from the earth in response to the Buddha’s discourse.⁷⁸ This apparition triggers the convergence of all the *buddhas* from the ten directions—who are but emanations (*fenshen*^{ay}) of the one eternal Buddha—on this Sahā world sphere, now become a pure land. Śākyamuni then opens the door of the *stūpa* to reveal the Buddha Prabhūtaratna seated within on a “lion throne” (*shizi zuo*^{az}); and the two sit on this seat side by side, recalling the way in which Sadaparudita, in the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā*, joins Dharmodgata on his high seat and there gains various powers of concentration and discernment. This conflation of the high seat and the hollow *stūpa* sheds light on, and is reflected in, another Chinese tale in which, during a *sūtra* recital, an apparition of “a strange-looking monk” manifests itself “inside the seat” (*yu zuonei*^{ba}).⁷⁹

This, then, is the sort of scriptural background against which the symbolism of the Chinese tales becomes explicable.

3. The Sūtra as a Metonymic Symbol of Buddhist Norms

Finally, I translate one example of a tale that uses a copy of a *sūtra* as a kind of metonym for Buddhist norms and teachings.

A governor of Wuxing district under the Song, Wang Xizhi of Langye, was a learned man who loved the [Daoist] teachings of Lao and Zhuang, did not believe in the Buddha, and devoted himself entirely to animal sacrifices (*wei shi zaisha wei zhi*^{bb}). At the time when he had begun serving as Inspector of the West-

ern Division of the Gentlemen of the Palace⁸⁰ under the Jin dynasty, he was fond of entertaining guests. Inside his quarters he raised a pair of geese, toward which he felt very affectionate and which he considered as having gradually developed personalities.⁸¹ One night he dreamt that one of the geese was carrying a scroll of text in its bill, consisting of around ten sheets. When [in the dream] he took the text and examined it, he found that it concerned matters of [karmic] sin and merit. The next morning he did in fact find the text [in his chambers], and it turned out to be a Buddhist *sūtra*. So from that moment he ceased killing, and outstripped others in his faith. Later he became wealthy and prominent (*XYJ* 24 [LX 443]; cf. *BZL* sec. 8, 539a).

Here the dream-text, an initial symbol of “matters of sin and merit” which it would behoove the protagonist to take seriously, becomes in waking reality—and is recognized as—a *sūtra*. Its narrative translation from the dream-world to the waking state mirrors the protagonist’s conversion from urbane courtier to devout layman.

III. Conclusion

This study suggests the need for broader, comparative inquiry into the status, role, and range of uses of religious texts in medieval China. Careful comparisons with exactly contemporary Daoist uses and understandings of the nature of scriptural texts, for instance, would be illuminating. In the case of the Shangqing scriptures, first revealed by the gods to Yang Xi in the late fourth century and compiled by Tao Hongjing (456–536) in the late fifth and early sixth centuries, it has been shown that, for many devotees, the sheer reception, possession, and transmission of the texts was at least as significant as the reading of them or the practice of the teachings they contained. According to Michel Strickmann, possession of these textual commodities—when gained by proper rites of transmission, not by other methods such as theft (through illicit copying) and forgery—“guaranteed as a rule the acquisition of an honourable posthumous position in the complex hierarchy of the Unseen World, even should the possessor never practise the operations

set forth in the text." Furthermore, this guarantee was issued by the Daoist divinities in the scriptures themselves; in no way can it be dismissed, as it would naturally be by past generations of scholars, as a mere practical (or popular) corruption of orthodoxy. And here, too, the primary unit of ownership of texts was often not an individual but a family or clan as a corporate body; "texts received through authorised channels of transmission," to quote Strickmann again, "became part of a family's inalienable stock of goods," on the same plane as its corporate stock of merit compiled in the unseen world.⁸² As we have seen, the narrative evidence gives ample reason to believe that Chinese Buddhists saw their *sūtras* in closely similar ways. Furthermore, these Daoist modes of reception of scriptures rested in part upon certain conceptions of what the Daoist scriptures essentially were, and here again, comparisons with Buddhist conceptions of the nature of *sūtra* texts would be fruitful.⁸³

Further inquiry into how the uses and understandings of *sūtra* texts changed over time in China is also needed. In the Six Dynasties tales surveyed here, for instance, there is little (although there is some) mention of the efficacy of offerings to *sūtra* texts as such; nor is there much emphasis on the efficacy of even a chance single hearing of a *sūtra* recital. Both of these motifs would become markedly prominent in Tang Buddhist tales, a fact which prompts one to wonder whether this subtle but important literary shift reflects a change in modes of piety and Chinese notions concerning *sūtras*, or is simply an epiphenomenon of the fact that certain tales happen to have been preserved and others lost from each century. The tentative answering of such questions could be aided, in turn, by the study of other types of Chinese Buddhist materials dealing with ritual procedures for, and merits of, various uses of *sūtras* and other texts.⁸⁴ Finally, there remains the question of the relative extent to which these uses and understandings of *sūtras* are distinctively Chinese or, on the contrary, are based squarely on Indian precedents contained in canonical texts or in the archaeological record. These various issues are beyond the scope of this paper but are the directions in which it points.

It is fitting to conclude with ruminations on a statement made by Reginald A. Ray, though perhaps of a sort not intended by him:

Throughout its history, Buddhist tradition has maintained a paradoxical attitude toward its sacred texts. On the one hand, those texts have themselves been the objects of the utmost veneration; and life, limb, and more have been sacrificed to ensure their unaltered preservation. . . . At the same time, Buddhism avers that the sacred text has, in and of itself, no particular value. Its worth depends entirely on what is done with it.⁸⁵

Ray's observation is confirmed by the narratives studied here. For in them, paradoxically, it is when *sūtras* are represented as powerful commodities that can take the place of other entities as the efficacious objects of utmost veneration, and thus are placed at the very center of religious practice, that they seem most empty of intrinsic value. In the world of these narratives, very little turns on the appropriation of the doctrinal contents of *sūtras*, or, to put it differently, on the "own-being" of the texts. By contrast, much depends on how they are used, on the functional place they fill in a system of roles and relationships, on how they are perceived, received, and socially constituted. Little importance is attached to the texts as vessels of doctrinal meaning; much importance is attached to the veneration in which the texts are held, and, in turn, to the role this veneration itself plays in the larger fabric of life. And this veneration, even when it takes the form of recitation, is not essentially a literary act but an act of faith and of a certain quality of mind. Much, in sum, turns on Ray's "what is done with it," precious little on the "it" taken in itself.

Yet—here the paradox turns back deliciously upon itself—it is the contents of the *sūtra* texts themselves that set up this functional way of appropriating them. For, while they do not enjoin readers to ignore their teachings and simply commodify them as objects of veneration, many of the *sūtras* mentioned in the tales teach the efficacy of acts of veneration to themselves, acts such as possession, copying, reciting, wearing, hearing, and making offerings.⁸⁶ What is therefore most striking about these narratives is that they document the seriousness with which their authors and compilers, in the earliest centuries of the Buddhist presence in China, took these translated *sūtras'* self-presentations.

**Appendix: Primary Texts and Editions Used, with Dates;⁸⁷ Abbreviations;
Explanation of Citation Methods**

GSY *Guangshiyin yingyan ji* 光世音應驗記

A Record of Avalokiteśvara's Responsive Manifestations

Originally written before 399 by Xie Fu but lost in that year; partially reconstructed by Fu Liang (374–426). 7 tales + preface. RKKO ed.

XYJ *Xuanyan ji* 宣驗記

Records in Proclamation of Manifestations

Attributed to Liu Yiqing (403–444). 35 tales. LX ed.

XuGSY *Xu Guangshiyin yingyan ji* 續光世音應驗記

Continued Records of Avalokiteśvara's Responsive Manifestations

Written by Zhang Yan in mid-fifth century. 10 tales + preface. RKKO ed.

MXJ *Mingxiang ji* 冥祥記

Signs from the Obscure Realm

Compiled by Wang Yan between 485 and 501. 131 tales + preface. LX ed.

XiGSY *Xi Guanshiyin yingyan ji* 繫觀世音應驗記

More Records of Avalokiteśvara's Responsive Manifestations

Compiled by Lu Gao in 501. 69 tales + preface. RKKO ed.

GSZ *Gaoseng zhuan* 高僧傳

Lives of Eminent Monks

Written by Huijiao ca. 531. T2059, v.50.

JYJ *Jingyi ji* 旌異記

Citations of Marvels

Written by Hou Bo between 581 and 604. 10 tales. LX ed.

XYiJ *Xiangyi ji* 詳異記

Signs of the Marvelous⁸⁸

Author and date unknown; most likely pre-Tang. 2 tales. LX ed.

BZL *Bianzheng lun* 辯正論

Essays on the Discernment of Right

Polemical treatise compiled ca. 627 by Falin. *T*2110, v.52.

FYZL *Fayuan zhulin* 法苑珠林

A Grove of Pearls from the Garden of the Dharma

Buddhist encyclopedia compiled ca. 668 by Daoshi. *T*2122, v.53.

LX Lu Xun, ed., *Gu xiaoshuo gouchen*, in *Lu Xun sanshinian ji* (n.p.: Lu Xun quanji chubanshe, 1941) 古小說鈎沈

Ancient Tales Rescued from the Depths of Oblivion

Citations give the serial order of the tale in the particular collection in which it appears, followed by the page numbers in this edition.

RKKO Makita Tairyō, ed., *Rikuchō koitsu Kanzeon ōkenki no kenkyū* (Kyoto: Hyōrakuji shoten, 1970) 六朝古逸觀世音應驗の研究

A Study of Tales of Avalokiteśvara's Responsive Manifestations Surviving from the Six Dynasties

Citations of tales first give the serial number of the tale in its particular collection, then the page number(s).

T *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* (Tokyo, 1924–34) 大正新修大藏經

Number following *T* is the number assigned to the title in this edition of the Chinese Buddhist canon; volume number is given next, followed by page numbers; letters indicate register.

TPGJ *Taiping guangji* (Shanghai, 1930) 太平廣記

Number before decimal indicates the *juan* number; number after decimal indicates the cited story's place in the series of stories contained in that *juan* (e.g., 110.2 indicates the second item in *juan* 110).

DZ *Zhengtong daoze* (Shanghai, 1925–27) 正統道藏

Number given is that of the fascicle (not the case) in which the text is located.

HY *Daoze zimu yinde*, *Combined Indices to the Authors and Titles of Books in Two Collections of Taoist Literature*, Harvard-Yenching Institute Sino-logical Index Series 25 (Peking, 1935). Number given is that assigned by this index to the cited text.

DKWJT Morohashi Tetsuji, comp., *Dai Kan-wa jiten* (Tokyo: Taishukan shoten, 1957–60) 大漢和辭典

Cited by volume number (followed by colon), page, and register.

BKDJT Mochizuki Shinkō, *Bukkyō daijiten* (Tokyo, 1931–63) 佛教大辭典

Cited by page number (volumes are continuously paginated).

BKGDJT Nakamura Hajime, *Bukkyōgo daijiten* (Tokyo: Shosekikan, 1975)

Cited in same manner as *DKWJT*. 佛教語大辭典

NOTES

1. Erik Zürcher, *The Buddhist Conquest of China*, 2 vols. (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1972), 1:73. I would like to thank my colleague, Professor Gregory Schopen, for his valuable critical comments on an earlier draft of this article.

2. The best overview of the miracle tale genre in its early period, including translations of sample tales, is Donald E. Gjertson, "The Early Chinese Buddhist Miracle Tale: A Preliminary Survey," *JAOS* 101.3 (1981):287–301. For the genre's continuation into the early Tang period (from 618 on), see also Donald E. Gjertson, *Miraculous Retribution: A Study and Translation of T'ang Lin's "Ming-pao chi"*, Berkeley Buddhist Studies Series 8 (Berkeley: Centers for South and Southeast Asian Studies, University of California, 1989), the introduction to which contains additional translations of some pre-Tang tales. For examples of Tang tales—in this case, a collection devoted exclusively to miracles associated with the *Diamond Sūtra*—see also Bruno Belpaire, *T'ang kien wen tse: Florilège de littérature des T'ang* (Paris, 1959), 223–45. Three tales from the largest extant pre-Tang collection, the *MXJ*, are translated in Karl S. Y. Kao, *Classical Chinese Tales of the Supernatural and the Fantastic* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 164–75; for a study of the *MXJ*, including a comprehensive listing of the loci at which its items are now extant and the internal dates of the items, see Shinohara Koichi, "Meishoki ni tsuite," *Tōyōgaku shūkan* 22 (1969):41–65. On the rise and early development of the *zhiguai* genre, see the introduction to Kao, ed., *Classical Chinese Tales*, as well as my *Chinese Accounts of the Strange: A Study in Religious Cosmography* (forthcoming from State University of New York Press). For additional Western-language studies of Chinese Buddhist tales and Indian influence on them, see the works listed in Laurence G. Thompson, *Chinese Religion in Western Languages* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1985), section on "Popular Buddhism—Buddhist Stories," 255–57. Numerous studies have been published of the continuation of the miracle tale genre in Japan, where it flourished; the most relevant of these include but are not limited to the following: Yoshiko K. Dykstra, "Miraculous Tales of the Lotus Sūtra: The *Dainihon-*

koku Hokkegenki," *Monumenta Nipponica* 32 (1977):189–210; idem, *Miraculous Tales of the Lotus Sūtra from Ancient Japan: The 'Dainihonkoku Hokekyōgenki' of Priest Chingen* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1983); idem, "Tales of the Compassionate Kannon: The *Hasedera Kannon Genki*," *Monumenta Nipponica* 31 (1976):113–43; Kyoko Motomochi Nakamura, *Miraculous Stories from the Japanese Buddhist Tradition* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973); and Marian Ury, *Tales of Times Now Past: Sixty-two Stories from a Medieval Japanese Collection* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979). For examples of texts that stand on the fringe of the miracle tale genre in Japan, but are clearly related to it, see Robert E. Morrell, *Sand and Pebbles (Shasekishū)* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985), and Royall Tyler, *The Miracles of the Kasuga Deity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990). The relationships between these Japanese texts and their Chinese models have yet, as far as I am aware, to be fully explored.

3. A partial translation—of the large and important section devoted to translators—is available: Robert Shih, *Biographies des moines éminents ('Kao seng ichouan') de Houei-kiao* (Louvain: Institut Orientaliste, 1968).

4. The statement that the miracle tales were written by laypersons needs two qualifications: (1) As in the case of hagiographies and, indeed, any sort of text from this period, we have to deal with attributions of authorship, attributions which in the case of these texts are likely to be accurate. (2) In some cases these lay authors surely wrote the tales appearing in texts under their names, based upon personal experience or hearsay; this becomes clearest from their extant prefaces and biographies, for a discussion of which see my *Chinese Accounts*, chaps. 3 and 5. In other cases, however, they copied versions of tales from other sources both lay and monastic in origin and both textual and inscriptional in nature. As for the encyclopaedias, the two most useful for studying the tales are the seventh century *FYZL* and the tenth century *TPGJ*. (For a key to all abbreviations and a list of editions used, see the Appendix.) On the *FYZL*, see S. F. Teiser, "T'ang Buddhist Encyclopedias: An Introduction to *Fa-yüan chu-lin* and *Chu-ching yao-chi*," *T'ang Studies* 30(1985):109–28. On the purpose and circumstances of the compilation of the *TPGJ*, see Ssu-yü Teng and Knight Biggerstaff, *An Annotated Bibliography of Selected Chinese Reference Works*, 3d ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), 125, and Étienne Balazs and Yves Hervouet, eds., *A Sung Bibliography (Bibliographie des Sung)* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1978), 341; for an analysis of its taxonomic scheme, see Edward H. Schafer, "The 'Table of Contents of the *T'ai p'ing kuang chi*,'" *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews* 2.2 (July 1980):258–63.

5. On Huijiao's use of sources and the close interrelations between his hagiographies and contemporary miracle tale collections, see Arthur F. Wright, "Biography and Hagiography: Hui-chiao's *Lives of Eminent Monks*," in *Silver Jubilee Volume of the Zibun-Kagaku-Kenkyūso, Kyoto University* (Kyoto: Kyoto University, 1954), 383–432. An informative, recent study that has done even more to clarify the complex interrelationships is Koichi Shinohara, "Two Sources of Chinese Buddhist Biographies: Stupa Inscriptions and Miracle Stories," in *Monks and Magicians: Religious Biographies in Asia*, ed. Phyllis Granoff and Koichi Shinohara (Oakville, Ontario: Mosaic Press, 1988), 119–228, which includes

an exhaustive list of textual parallels between the *GSZ* and the miracle tale collections. Shinohara finds parallel passages concerning 36 distinct individuals.

6. Other topics in these narratives on which I am preparing articles include notions of afterlife and mortuary and post-mortuary Buddhist practices, the use of images, and understandings of visualization and dreams.

7. One important “popular” mode of reception, excluded here because it goes largely unmentioned in the tale literature on which this study is based, is that of lectures or sermons to laity. Texts of these lectures (*jiangjing wen*^{bc})—some of which may have been delivered to lay audiences—were found at Dunhuang; a collection of them has been published in Wang Zhongmin, ed., *Dunhuang bianwen ji* (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1984), 2:411–700.

8. See Miriam Levering, “Introduction: Rethinking Scripture,” and “Scripture and Its Reception: A Buddhist Case,” in Levering, ed., *Rethinking Scripture: Essays from a Comparative Perspective* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 1–17 and 58–101; and Jan Yün-hua, “The Power of Recitation: An Unstudied Aspect of Chinese Buddhism,” *Studi Storico Religiosi* 1.2 (1977):289–99. An earlier, though less direct, inspiration for the line of research reported in this article came from Gregory Schopen, “The Phrase ‘*sa pṛthivī-pradeśāḥ cāityabhūto bhavet*’ in the *Vajracchedikā*: Notes on the Cult of the Book in Mahāyāna,” *Indo-Iranian Journal* 17 (1975):147–81.

9. In one miracle-tale collection alone—the *XiGSY* by Lu Gao, completed in 501—there are at least nine mentions of numbers of repetitions, including one story in which a layman vows to recite the *Guanshiyin jing* ten thousand times and indeed completes at least 7,000 recitations before his prayer is granted.

10. The monk Shi Senghong is said to have recited the *Guanshiyin jing* for a month while in prison, after which time—also having previously fashioned a bronze image of the Buddha or perhaps of the *bodhisattva* Guanshiyin—he was miraculously spared execution (*XiGSY* 22 [*RKKO* 35]; cf. *MXJ* 129 [*LX* 533–34]).

11. For example: the hagiography of Shi Fagong, in *GSZ*, *songjing* section, item 11 (407c), states that he “recited *sūtras* up to more than 300,000 words/syllables.” Compare the similar statement in the hagiography of Shi Daosong, *GSZ*, *songjing* section item 16 (408b).

12. For example, Shi Zhaobian’s *GSZ* hagiography (*songjing* section item 17, 408b) says that he recited the *Lotus Sūtra* once a day for over 30 years as his special vocation. Cf. the hagiography of Shi Senghou, who is credited with often having completed an entire recitation of the *Lotus*, *Vimalakīrti*, or *Jinguangming* (*Suvarṇaprabhāsa*, T 663) *sūtras* in two days and with having continued this practice for 60 years (*GSZ*, *songjing* section, item 19, 408c).

13. I follow Wright, “Biography and Hagiography,” 405, in translating the names of the categories of monks in the *Gaoseng zhuan*. On “Sanskrit chants” in China during this period, see Zenryū Tsukamoto, *A History of Early Chinese Buddhism*, tr. Leon Hurvitz (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1985), 1:326–30.

14. The literal meaning of his Chinese name, Guanshiyin, is He Who Observes the Sounds of the World; Hurvitz translates it literally. I have here written “Avalokiteśvara” since that is the name of the corresponding Indian

figure; but in doing so I do not intend to enter into the dispute over the etymology of the Sanskrit or, for that matter, the Chinese name. In what follows I will use the untranslated Chinese name unless quoting Hurvitz.

15. The first translation, that of Dharmarakṣa completed in 286, probably contained only the prose and not the verse sections or *gāthās*. The most famous and perhaps the most widely circulated translation, that of Kumārajīva (ca. 350–410) done in 406, is the one that will be referred to here; in it, the *Guanshiyin pusa pumenpin* stands as the twenty-fifth chapter.

16. The extreme importance of the *Lotus* in Chinese Buddhist thought and practice needs no comment here; I merely note that as many as 1,048 copies were found around the turn of the century in the sealed collection at Dunhuang, by far the greatest number of copies of any *sūtra* found there; and almost 200 separate copies of the *Guanshiyin jing* recovered from Dunhuang exist today in collections outside the People's Republic of China, with many more doubtless preserved in Chinese collections. See Miyeko Murase, "Kuan-yin as Savior of Men: Illustration of the Twenty-fifth Chapter of the Lotus Sūtra in Chinese Painting," *Artibus Asiae* 33 (1971):39–40.

17. See Kumārajīva's (ca. 350–410) translation, *Miaofa lianhua jing* (T 262, v.9, 56c–58b), and the English translation based on this version by Leon Hurvitz, *Scripture of the Lotus Blossom of the Fine Dharma (The Lotus Sūtra)* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), 311–19.

18. Other stories picture the protagonist as simply calling the *bodhisattva*'s name out loud, as the *Lotus* text describes. Protagonists often perform other devotions as well, such as vowing to build a *stūpa*, feed monks, or join the saṅgha if saved. The reader should note that the saving power of Guanshiyin was promulgated not just in stories but also through visual media; see Miyeko Murase, "Kuan-yin as Savior of Men" (cited above), as well as Cornelius P. Chang, "Kuan-yin Paintings from Tun-huang," *Journal of Oriental Studies (Hong Kong)* 15 (1977):140–60 + 5 plates.

19. 56c, lines 20–22, following Hurvitz, *Lotus*, 312.

20. *XiGSY* items 19–20, 23, 27, and 34–40 (*RKKO* 33–34, 36, 38, and 40–43 respectively); *MXJ* 84 (LX 506–7), on which *XiGSY* 23 is based; *MXJ* 119 (LX 528). In a closely related story type, the protagonist gains official pardon from punishment for a crime he or she is alleged to have committed; see, e.g., *XiGSY* 22 and 23 (*RKKO* 35–36).

21. *XiGSY* 19 (*RKKO* 33–34), following Makita's suggested readings based on variants (notes 113–114).

22. Some stories of the latter category, in mentioning a "recitation of the *Lotus*," may be using that title to refer not to the entire *Lotus Sūtra* but only to the *Guanshiyin jing*.

23. *MXJ* 69 (LX 498).

24. Cf. *XiGSY* 55 (*RKKO* 50), in which a son is born as a result of a vow (not *sūtra* recitation) on the eighth day of the fourth month (traditionally the Buddha's birthday) and is named Guanshiyin; and the story of Wang Min's wife in *BZL* sec. 8, 537c, also appearing in *TPGJ* 110.4.

25. *MXJ* 96 (LX 513), the story of Gu Mao, a Song official; *MXJ* 87 (LX 508), the story of the monk Zhu Huiqing, also appearing in *GSZ*, *songjing* sec-

tion, item 7, 407b, and discussed by Shinohara, "Two Sources of Chinese Buddhist Biographies," 139; and the story of the monk Shi (or, in some versions, Zhu) Fachun transporting by water a column for a new temple, appearing in (a) *XiGSY* 8 (*RKKO* 29), (b) *GSZ*, *songjing* section, item 3, 406c, (c) *MXJ* 46 (LX 485). On the various versions of the latter story, see Shinohara, "Two Sources of Chinese Buddhist Biographies," 133–36.

26. *XYiJ* 2 (LX 432); *MXJ* 125 (LX 532–33); *GSZ*, *songjing* section, item 13, 407c–408a.

27. *XiGSY* 63 (*RKKO* 55–56).

28. *XiGSY* 62 (*RKKO* 54–55).

29. See, e.g., *GSY* 3 (*RKKO* 15–16), which is translated in Donald E. Gjeterson, *Ghosts, Gods, and Retribution: Nine Buddhist Miracle Tales from Six Dynasties and Early T'ang China*, Asian Studies Committee Occasional Papers Series no. 2 (Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 1978), 5–6. Cf. *XiGSY* 46 (*RKKO* 45–46), also appearing in *MXJ* 47 (LX 485), in which a layman captured by Qiang cannibals while gathering herbs in the mountains is the only one of his party to escape being eaten. A tiger appears, chases off his Qiang captors, and frees him from the cage in which he has been held.

30. *GSY* 1 (*RKKO* 14), also *MXJ* 12 (LX 461–62).

31. *MXJ* 73 (LX 500); cf. *GSZ*, 338b–339c. This figure is not to be confused with the character of the same name in *T* 224, discussed below, p. 50 (Tanwujie). Cf. *XuGSY* 3 (*RKKO* 20–21), in which the hermit-monk Huijian first concentrates on Guanshiyin and then recites his *sūtra* in order to subdue a mountain spirit.

32. One story tells of how the monk Shi Sengrong, beset on Lu Mountain by a group of ghosts (*gui*^{bd}) who were angered by his insistence that "ghosts and gods have no spiritual efficacy" (*guishen wuling*^{be}), called out the name of the *bodhisattva* Guanshiyin, and "before the sound of the last syllable faded away" there appeared a tall figure clad as a general who killed one of the ghosts and drove off the rest. The text then continues: "The *sūtra* mentions that in some cases [the *bodhisattva*] appears in the body of a general of the gods, to save [beings] according to the appropriate means: is this not such a case?" (*XuGSY* 6 [*RKKO* 22]; Makita [n.17] notes that this story appears in six other places). Here the author is clearly referring to the line in the twenty-fifth chapter of the *Lotus* which occurs in a list of the manifold bodily forms which the *bodhisattva* will display in order to convert beings of various types and levels of consciousness: "To those who can be conveyed to deliverance by the body of the general of the gods he [Guanshiyin] preaches Dharma by displaying the body of the general of the gods" (57b, lines 2–4; Hurvitz, trans., 314). Similarly, in the rather famous story of how the monk Zhu Fayi (who was especially skilled in reciting the *Lotus*) after singlemindedly calling on Guanshiyin for several days was miraculously healed by a dream-figure who cut him open and removed, washed, and replaced his intestines, the dream-figure is explicitly identified with the "*brahmacārin śramaṇa*" mentioned in the *sūtra* (*GSZ* 350c–351a; *GSY* 7 [*RKKO* 18]; *MXJ* 32 [LX 474–75]; *FYZL* 95 [988b] and 17 [409b], although the latter version fails to identify the dream-figure with the one mentioned in the *sūtra*; *TPGJ* 110.3). See the discussions of the various versions of this story by Makita

(*RKKO* 82, n.10) and Shinohara ("Two Sources of Chinese Buddhist Biographies," 132–33). Gjertson translates one version (*Miraculous Retribution*, 18–19).

33. The first seven rubrics are from the *Guanshiyin jing*, the last four from the *Qing Guanshiyin jing*. According to Nanjio, the latter *sūtra*, *T* 1043 (v.20, 34–38, Skt. *Ṣaḍakṣaravidyā-mantra*?), was translated sometime in the late fourth or early fifth century, then lost, then retranslated in 420; see Bunyiu Nanjio, *A Catalogue of the Chinese Translation of the Buddhist Tripitaka* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1883), p.83 (no. 326). Its contents are helpfully discussed in Kobayashi Taichirō, "Shin Tō no Kannon," *Bukkyō geijutsu* 10 (1950):14–15, and in Alexander Coburn Soper, *Literary Evidence for Early Buddhist Art in China* (Ascona: Artibus Asiae Publishers, 1959), 150ff. Like the *Guanshiyin jing*, it promises Buddhist faithful that they have but to invoke the *bodhisattva* and he will instantly rescue them from various perils. As its title implies, it contains several *dhāraṇīs* the incantation of which renders Guanshiyin present. It puts its words in the mouth not of Śākyamuni but of Amitāyur-buddha, who is attended by the *bodhisattvas* Guanshiyin and Mahāsthāmaprāpta.

34. Two of the best examples are *MXJ* 13 (LX 462), based on *FYZL* 63 (764c), a story of how Huiyuan during a drought recited the *sūtra* and secured a rain at his monastic retreat on Lushan, erecting a "Nāga Spring *Vihāra*^{bf}" at the spring from which the creature emerged and flew up to heaven; and *MXJ* 56 (LX 488–89), based on *FYZL* 63 (764b–c), in which the Indian monk Zhu Tanyi recites the same *sūtra* and secures rain on behalf of General Liu Yi. The latter story is particularly clear on the magical effects of the recital, keying stages in the rainstorm's progress to points in the reading (e.g., "as he began to recite, clouds began to form; when he reached midpoint, clouds began converging from all sides," etc.). In thus securing rain, monks were assuming a role long occupied by shamans in China: see Edward H. Schafer, "Ritual Exposure in Ancient China," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 14 (1951):130–84. *FYZL* 63 is a rich mine of such stories. On Buddhist *nāga* lore, see esp. Lowell W. Bloss, "The Buddha and the Naga: A Study in Buddhist Folk Religiosity," *History of Religions* 13.1 (Aug. 1973):36–53; Lowell K. Bloss, "Ancient Indian Folk Religion as Seen through the Symbolism of the Nāga," PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1971; and M. W. de Visser, *The Dragon in China and Japan* (Amsterdam: Johannes Müller, 1913).

35. For example, *MXJ* 17 (LX 464) (based on *FYZL* 42 [616b–c]), in which a deceased pious layman appears at the recital being conducted on his behalf, having momentarily returned from the Western Land of Bliss, in order to hear the *sūtras*; and *MXJ* 63 (LX 492–93) (based on *FYZL* 42 [616c–617a]), in which, during the recital for a recently deceased foreign monk, a cloud suddenly appears from the southwest (i.e., the direction of India) and a mysterious object encircles the corpse and then disappears.

36. Examples are extremely numerous; one of the longest, most odd, and most humorous is *MXJ* 80 (LX 503–4, based on a *FYZL* item which I cannot locate), in which a virtuous dead man during his own funeral instructs his family to recite the *Śūramgamasamādhi-sūtra* in order to expel a hungry ghost posing as him. An example probably involving the *Guanshiyin jing*, though the title of the *sūtra* is never made explicit, is *XuGSY* 3 (*RKKO* 20–21).

37. On the theory of commodities I have benefited from Arjun Appadurai, ed., *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); on specifically sacred commodities, see, *infra alia*, the essay by Patrick Geary in that volume, as well as his *Furta Sacra: Thefts of Relics in the Central Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978). On the historical realia of Chinese book production, which I do not address here, see, *infra alia*, Tsuen-hsuen Tsien, *Written on Bamboo and Silk* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), and now Frederick W. Mote and Hung-lam Chu, *Calligraphy and the East Asian Book* (Boston: Shambhala, 1989), esp. (for *sūtra* texts) 51ff. On the mythology and symbolism surrounding writing techniques in China and elsewhere, see my *Chinese Accounts*, chap. 2.

38. The first story is found in *XYJ* 5 (LX 436–37), which is based on *TPGJ* 161.22 (13.4a). The second is *XuGSY* 3 (*RKKO* 20–21).

39. The text gives the *sūtra* title simply as *Dapin*^{bg}, which in clerical contexts would indicate a short name for the *Larger Perfection of Wisdom Sūtra* (specifically in its 25,000-line version, the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*). On this identification, see John R. McRae, “Ch’an Commentaries on the *Heart Sūtra*: Preliminary Inferences on the Permutation of Chinese Buddhism,” *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 11.2 (1988):88 and 106 n.8, and Tsukamoto, *History of Early Chinese Buddhism*, 2:996 note k. In this story, the text meant could be a version of any one of the titles now classified as *T*220–223.

40. This refers to the disastrous events leading up to and including the fall of Loyang in 311 to “Hun” forces under Liu Zong. See Wolfram Eberhard, *A History of China*, 4th ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 123–25.

41. *MXJ* 20 (LX 465–66); *FYZL* 18 (417b); *TPGJ* 113.3. Liu Jingshu, mentioned as having personally viewed this miniature *sūtra*, is the reputed author of an important *zhiguai* text, the *Yiyuan*^{bh} (*Garden of Marvels*), now extant in a reconstructed version of ten *juan*. I have not yet found any further information on the nun Jingshou.

42. For a stimulating study of “the cultural biography of things,” see the essay by Igor Kopytoff in the volume edited by Arjun Appadurai and cited above (n. 37).

43. On this motif see Michihata Ryōshū, *Chūgoku bukkō to shakai to no kōshō* (Kyoto: Heirakuji shoten, 1980), esp. 94–111. On the giving of oneself as an offering in China, see also Jan Yün-hua, “Buddhist Self-Immolation in Medieval China,” *History of Religions* 4 (1964–1965):243–68, and Jacques Gernet, “Les suicides par le feu chez les bouddhistes chinois du Ve au Xe siècle,” *Mélanges de l’Institut des Hautes Etudes Chinoises* 2 (1960):527–88. For Indian parallels, see J. Filliozat, “La mort volontaire par le feu et la tradition bouddhique indienne,” *Journal Asiatique* 251 (1963):21–51.

44. An example of a story about copying is *MXJ* 35 (LX 476–77), in which a hermit copies the *Shoulengyan jing* (*Sūramgama[samādhi] sūtra*, *T* 642) by hand. Afterwards, he was present at the White Horse Temple when a fire broke out; all was destroyed save this *sūtra*, which was miraculously preserved.

45. In the miracle tale corpus, examples of this motif include the famous story of Emperor Ming of the Han (*MXJ* 1 [LX 451]) and that of the monk Shixing’s westward travels to Khotan in search of texts (*MXJ* 3 [LX 452–53]),

each discussed by Zürcher (in his *Buddhist Conquest of China*) at 1:22 and 1:61ff. respectively; *MXJ* 11 (LX 461), concerning Kang (i.e. “the Sogdian”) Falang’s journey to India; and *MXJ* 73 (LX 500), concerning Tan (i.e., “the Indian’s”) Wujié’s journeys to “Buddhist countries” in search of scriptures, during the course of which his devotion to Guanshiyin repeatedly saved him and his 52 disciples from attack by animals.

46. I have translated as “the enemy” the Chinese term *lu*^{bi}, which in this and other stories from these collections probably refers to any of several groups of non-Chinese northerners who were in control of large regions of north China during these centuries. *Lu* means “slaves” or “bondsmen,” and may refer to those in the lower echelons of the tribal organizations of these groups, on which see Eberhard, *A History of China*, 109–47; here, however, it is more likely a term of disdain, similar to the term *fei*^{bi} (“bandits”) as used in modern Chinese. Whoever the *lu* were, they are ubiquitous in the pre-Tang Buddhist miracle tales—and especially in the *XiGSY*—as relentless marauders of Chinese people; they are often depicted as pursuing Chinese on horseback, capturing them, and killing them or forcing them into servitude.

47. Translation based on a comparison of several extant versions: *XiGSY* 57 (*RKKO* 50–51); *MXJ* 92 (LX 511–12), which is based on *FYZZ* 23 (459b). The last two versions add a further story of Xing Huaiming which is omitted here.

48. I will translate and discuss these in the article, now in preparation and alluded to below, on the role of images in the early Chinese miracle tale and hagiographic corpus.

49. On his coiffure in Indian artistic representations, see the classic study by Marie-Thérèse de Mallmann, *Introduction à l'étude d'Avalokiteśvara* (Paris: Civilisations du Sud, 1948), 221ff. This iconographic feature was carried over into China—though it is impossible to know how early—since on wall paintings and silk banners recovered at Dunhuang and dating from the seventh to the eleventh centuries, Guanyin is usually (though not always) represented with a small figurine in his headdress: see the illustrations in Murase, “Kuan-yin as Savior of Men,” 39–74. Regarding meditation, Guanshiyin was visualized in China from at least the early fourth century, during meditation practices undertaken for rebirth in the Pure Land, as bearing a transformed Buddha on his head—a practice based on the *Guan Wuliangshoufo jing*^{bk} (*T* 365, *Amitāyur-buddhānusmṛti-sūtra* [?]), not to be confused with the *sūtra* known in Chinese as *Wuliangshou jing*^{bl} [*T* 360] and for which there is an extant Skt. *Sukhāvativyūha-sūtra*), in which the *locus classicus* comes in the Buddha’s instructions on how to visualize: “On top of his head is a heavenly crown of gems like those that are fastened (on Indra’s head), in which crown there is a transformed Buddha standing, twenty-five yoganās high” (quoted from J. Takakusu, tr., *The Amitāyur-dhyāna-sūtra*, in F. Max Müller, ed., *Sacred Books of the East* xlix [1894; rept. New York: Dover Publications, 1969], part ii, p. 182); see also de Mallmann, 22ff.; Soper, *Literary Evidence*, 141ff.; and for the Chinese reception—or, quite possibly, the independent Chinese origin—of this *sūtra* see Fujita Kotatsu, *Genshi jōdō-shisō no kenkyū* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1970), 116ff., and more recently his “The Textual Origins of the *Kuan Wu-liang-shou ching*: A

Canonical Scripture of Pure Land Buddhism,” in *Chinese Buddhist Apocrypha*, ed. Robert E. Buswell, Jr. (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990), 149–73. This head-carried Buddha-figure is the chief mark by which the visualizer distinguishes Avalokiteśvara/Guanshiyin from his counterpart Mahāsthāmaprāpta; on this point see Kenneth K. Tanaka, *The Dawn of Chinese Pure Land Buddhist Doctrine: Ching-ying Hui-yüan’s Commentary on the “Visualization Sūtra”* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), 170.

50. In the *XiGSY* and *MXJ* versions the Chinese reads: *toushang hengdai Guanshiyin jing*^{bm}. The *FYZZL* version simply gives *chang*^{bn} (“continuously”) in place of the synonymous *heng* but is otherwise identical.

51. Gregory Schopen, “The Manuscript of the *Vajracchedikā* Found at Gilgit,” in Luis O. Gomez and Jonathan A. Silk, eds., *Studies in the Literature of the Great Vehicle: Three Mahāyāna Buddhist Texts* (Ann Arbor: Collegiate Institute for the Study of Buddhist Literature and Center for South and Southeast Asian Studies, The University of Michigan, 1989), 124. The passage occurs in a manuscript found at Gilgit.

52. All three passages occur in the third chapter (“Parables”): (1) Hurvitz, tr., 76; cf. 15b, line 9; (2) Hurvitz, tr., 82; cf. 16a, line 27; (3) Hurvitz, tr., 82; cf. 16b, line 2. Schopen translates the Sanskrit passage that apparently corresponds to the Chinese (3) thus: “As some man who searches for it would thus preserve a relic of the Tathāgata, just so, he who searches for such a *sūtra*, after having obtained it, would carry it on his head,” the latter phrase being *mūrdhani dhārayeta* (“The Gilgit Manuscript,” 136).

53. The first passage occurs at Hurvitz, tr., 98; cf. 18c, lines 26–27. The second occurs at Hurvitz, tr., 252; cf. 45b, lines 24–25. Schopen translates what appears to be the Sanskrit passage corresponding to the second of these as follows: “Then, he carries the Tathāgata on his shoulder, who, after making this discourse on the Doctrine into a book, carries it on his shoulder” (“The Gilgit Manuscript,” 136). The Chinese here reads quite differently. A bit further on the Chinese text does mention the merits of *writing* the *sūtra* or “making it into a book” (*shu*^{bo} read as a verb), but it does not link the writing of the text with carrying it on the head or shoulders. I mention two further passages that are relevant, both involving corporeal rewards given by the Buddha to those who properly revere the *Lotus*: (1) One who reveres the *Lotus* is carried on the Buddha’s shoulders: “If there is a person who shall read and recite the Scripture of the Dharma Blossom, be it known that that person shall be of himself adorned with the adornments of a Buddha; borne about on the Buddha’s shoulders [*rulai jian suo hedan*^{bp}]. . .” (Hurvitz, tr., 175; cf. 31a, lines 4–5). (2) One who reveres the *Lotus* has his head caressed by the Buddha: “These persons . . . shall have had their heads caressed by the hand of the Thus Come One” [*wei rulai shou mo qi tou*^{bq}] (Hurvitz, tr., 178; cf. 31b, lines 25–26).

54. This nunnery is not mentioned in the sixth century *Loyang qielanzhi* (*Record of Buddhist Monasteries in Loyang*), the most complete and reliable pre-Tang work on Chinese monastic establishments, translated by Yi-t’ung Wang as *A Record of Buddhist Monasteries in Lo-yang* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984). It is, however, mentioned once in Shi Baozhang’s *Biqiuni zhuan* (*Biographies of Nuns*, T 2063, v.50, 934–48), written in 517, of which there is also an

English translation, competent but under-annotated: Li Jung-hsi, *Biographies of Buddhist Nuns: Pao-chang's "Pi-chiu-ni-chuan"* (Osaka: Tohokai, n.d.); cf. 45–47. I find no mention of the nun Shi Zhitong in this text, which is to be expected since the text was written to illustrate the virtues of exemplary nuns.

55. The Chinese for the last term is *zheng*^{br}, on which cf. *DKWJT* 4.481b. On the use of painted scrolls in lecture and devotional contexts, see Victor H. Mair, *T'ang Transformation Texts* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), and *Painting and Performance: Chinese Picture Recitation and its Indian Genesis* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1988).

56. Emending LX's *fanghuo*^{bs} ("emitted fire") and following *FYZL*'s *fangguang*^{bt} ("gave off light").

57. A Daoist exorcistic dance in which the priest, mimicking the world-ordering travels and labors of the proto-historical sage Yu, steps through the nine zones of the ritual arena as Yu traveled through the nine ancient provinces, sealing off each zone against demonic influence. For descriptions of the modern version, see Michael R. Saso, *Taoism and the Rite of Cosmic Renewal*, 2nd ed. (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 1989), 74 and 87–88, and John Lagerwey, *Taoist Ritual in Chinese Society and History* (New York: Macmillan, 1987), 99–102.

58. This story could thus also be analyzed as one of several instances of the motif of "the miraculous preservation of *sūtras*," often symbolizing the invincibility of Buddhadharma. Compare, for example, the stories of *sūtras*' miraculous preservation from fire reported in *MXJ* 35 (LX 476–77, drawing on *FYZL* 18 [418a]). This is in turn a sub-motif of the larger motif of "miraculous preservation of objects symbolic of Buddhism or of the Buddha (monasteries, *stūpas*, etc.)." And perhaps one could add as a sub-motif under the motif of "miraculous preservation of *sūtras*" the motif of "the non-decay of the tongues of corpses of people who recited the *Lotus Sūtra* while living": see *JYJ* 4, 7, and 9 (LX 539–40, 541, and 542, respectively).

59. I cite one more, rather humorous, example: the monk Shi Huiyan, complaining of its inordinate length, decides to trim down the *Daniepan jing*^{bu} (*Sūtra of the Great Decease*) and then makes copies of his abridgment for distribution, which he shows to his friends; but on two successive nights he is warned by an apparition about "the dangers of altering and taking lightly the *sūtras*," and on waking the third morning he destroys all his abridged copies and thus avoids punishment (*MXJ* 120 [LX 528–29], *FYZL* 18 [418c]).

60. This passage occurs in chapter 10 ("Preachers of Dharma") of Kumārajīva's translation; see 30c l.29–31a l.3, and Hurvitz, trans., 175: "O Medicine King! If there is an evil man who with unwholesome thought shall appear before the Buddha in the midst of a kalpa and constantly malign him, his guilt shall be comparatively light. If there is a person who with a single malicious word shall denigrate those who read and recite the Scripture of the Dharma Blossom, be they within the household or already out of the household, his guilt shall be very grave."

61. As seen again in chapter 10 (and elsewhere), 31b lines 26–29, Hurvitz, trans., 178: "O Medicine King! Wherever it may be preached, or read, or recited, or written, or whatever place a roll of this scripture may occupy, in all

those places one is to erect a *stūpa* of the seven jewels, building it high and wide and with impressive decoration. There is no need even to lodge *śarīra* [*sheli*^{by}, relics] in it. What is the reason? Within it there is already a whole body of the 'Thus Come One.'

62. There was no such reign period during the Jin. *Jian'an* was the name of the last effective Latter Han reign period, 196–220 C.E. The text as it stands could refer to this period, or it could perhaps be an erroneous reference to the Western Jin period *jianxing* (313–316) or the Eastern Jin periods *jianwu* (317), *jianyuan* (343–344), or *xian'an* (371–72). In his note, Lu Xun suggests that *jianyuan* is the period intended.

63. This term, given in both LX and FYZL, may be an error for the nearly homophonous term more commonly used to designate Buddhist banners in the tale corpus, namely *wei*^{bw}, which has already been seen above (e.g., in the story of the layman Liu Ling).

64. I take this passage as intending to describe some style of Indian dance.

65. MXJ 71 (LX 499); FYZL 15 (400b); TPGJ 114.2

66. Somewhat different is the story of the nun Huimu who learns to recite the *Mahā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra* at an early age, has visions of a divine monk-like figure in her teacher's *sūtra* hall, dreams while performing nocturnal recitations of traveling to the Western Pure Land, and finally has a visionary audience with (presumably Amitābha) Buddha, who expounds *sūtras* for her and is in the process of bestowing four scrolls on her when she is unfortunately awakened by a fellow nun. See MXJ 89 (LX 509–10), FYZL 15 (400a); compare her somewhat parallel biography in *Biqiuni zhuan*, *juan* 2 no.9, 938c, translated in Li Jung-hsi, *Biographies of Buddhist Nuns*, 60–61.

67. XiGSY 43 (RKKO 44); MXJ 52 (LX 487); FYZL 17 (410b); TPGJ 110.15.

68. XiGSY 23 (RKKO 36); MXJ 84 (LX 506–7); FYZL 23 (459b–c).

69. "Long Fasts" (*changzhai*^{bx}) were periods of special dietary restrictions and other observances carried out by pious monks and laity in the first, fifth, and ninth lunar months; see Tsukamoto, *A History of Early Chinese Buddhism*, 1:354. Similarly, "Eightfold Fasts" (*baguanzhai*^{by}) were four-day periods of convocations of lay and clerical Buddhists, during which eight special vows of abstention were observed; see Tsukamoto, *History*, 1:353 and 605–6 note ad. The monk Zhidun (314–366) has left three poems on the *baguanzhai*; see *Guang hong-ming ji*^{bz} (T 2103, v.52), *juan* 30, 350a–b.

70. The Chinese *sūtra* title is simply *Xiaopin*, which in clerical contexts would be—and probably is here as well—a shortened designation for the *Xiaopin banruo jing*^{ca} or one version of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā prajñāpāramitā-sūtra* (T 227); cf. Tsukamoto, *A History of Early Chinese Buddhism*, 1:372.

71. MXJ 23 (LX 468–69); FYZL 18 (417b–c); TPGJ 112.2. All give exactly the same phrase describing Ji's placing of the *sūtra* on his head. There follows another story, omitted here, telling of how Dong Ji recited this same *sūtra* to subdue the demons at a mountain near his home.

72. See BKDJT 1043; BKGDJT 1:397a; DKWJT 12:600a–b.

73. Johannes Prip-Møller, *Chinese Buddhist Monasteries* (Copenhagen, 1937; rpt. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1982), 268–71, describing a lecture Prip-Møller observed at Huiju Monastery on Baohuashan in Jiangsu. Cf. his description of the ceremonial “drying of the *sūtras*” (*shaijing*^{cb}) on a special platform each year on sixth day of the sixth lunar month (60–65).

74. See T224, *Daoxing banruo jing*^{cc}, v.8, 471c–478b. Conze has translated a Sanskrit manuscript: cf. *The Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines and Its Verse Summary*, 2d ed. (Bollinas, California: Four Seasons Foundation, 1975), 279–300. Conze translates *gaozuo* (and its abbreviated form, *zuo*) as “pulpit.” The Chinese text contains passages and details not found in Conze’s translation. On Lokakṣema, see Zürcher, *Buddhist Conquest*, 1:35–36. On the textual background of this *sūtra*, see Andrew Rawlinson, “The Position of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* in the Development of Early Mahāyāna,” in Lewis Lancaster, ed., *Prajñāpāramitā and Related Systems: Studies in Honor of Edward Conze* (Berkeley: Berkeley Buddhist Studies Series, 1977), 3–34.

75. 472a, lines 1–7; cf. Conze’s translation of the corresponding Sanskrit passage, 280–81.

76. The Chinese is *zimo*^{cd}, a compound that probably designates some mineral; I have been unable to identify it.

77. 473a, lines 23ff. The Sanskrit of Conze’s manuscript must read quite differently here, for he translates: “And in the middle of that pointed tower a couch made of the seven precious things was put up, and on it a box made of four large gems. Into that the perfection of wisdom was placed, written with melted vaidurya on golden tablets. And that pointed tower was adorned with brightly colored garlands which hung down in strips” (288).

78. 32b–34b; Hurvitz, tr., 183–94.

79. *MXJ* 108 (I.X 519–20, based on *FYZL* 17 [408c]).

80. “Gentlemen of the Palace” translates *sheng langzhong*^{cc}; cf. the description of this office given in Charles O. Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985), 301. Wang would thus have held this position early in his career, after completing the exams but before receiving an administrative appointment outside the capital.

81. The Chinese is *yiwei de xing*^{cd}, which I take to mean that Wang regarded his geese as having human-like natures, in the same way that many people come to regard their pet animals.

82. Michel Strickmann, “The Mao Shan Revelations: Taoism and the Aristocracy,” *T’oung Pao* 63 (1977):1–64; the first quotation above is taken from p. 28, the second from p. 30. For a translation of one of the Shangqing scriptures that promises divine rank to its possessors, see Michel Strickmann, *Le Taoïsme du Mao Chan: Chronique d’une révélation*, Mémoires de l’Institut des Hautes Etudes Chinoises 17 (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1981), 209–224, a translation of *Shangqing housheng daojun lieji*^{cc} (*DZ* 198, *HY* 442).

83. The Daoist canon contains vast, largely untapped resources for such a study. Consider, for example, simply the following passage, only one among probably hundreds of similar scriptural statements about the origins and metaphysical status of scriptures: “The Jade Slips of the Five Old Ones”—a humanly accessible version of which is revealed in the very text in which this

passage appears—"are texts that were completely self-created in empty space. They are hidden in the Seven-Jeweled Dark Tower within the Palace of Purple Tenuity in the Spirit Capital of the Ninth Heaven; they are guarded by the Five Thearch Divine Officials. In accordance with the Mysterious Regulations, they emerge once every 40,000 kalpas." This passage is taken from a Lingbao Daoist text probably written in the fifth century, the *Yuanshi wulao chishu yupian zhenwen tianshujing*^{ch} (DZ 26, HY22), 1a. The entire scripture is taken up with a description of the primordial cosmic origins and initial divine transmission of itself. I would like to thank my colleague, Professor Stephen Bokenkamp, for his comments on this text during a seminar at Indiana University in 1990, as well as other members of the seminar for their insights.

84. In this connection, see, for instance, the excellent work by Daniel Boucher, "Pratītyasamutpādagāthā: A Study and Contribution of Two T'ang Translations," M.A. thesis, Indiana University, 1989, which uses Chinese translations of two *sūtras* (here translated into English), Xuanzang's and Yijing's Indian pilgrimage accounts, and archeological evidence to paint a composite portrait of the widespread practice of enshrining the four-verse summation of Gautama's basic teaching on codependent origination within miniature *stūpas*, alongside—or as a functional replacement for—relics. While Boucher focuses on this practice in India, there is much in his study that is pertinent to China. See also Boucher's "The *Pratītyasamutpādagāthā* and Its Role in the Medieval Cult of the Relics" in this issue.

85. Reginald A. Ray, "Buddhism: Sacred Text Written and Realized," in Frederick M. Denny and Rodney L. Taylor, eds., *The Holy Book in Comparative Perspective* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1985), 148.

86. Perhaps it is the twin notions of skillful means (on the epistemological level) and emptiness (on the metaphysical level) that are most important in establishing the ideological ground for this double understanding of the religious role of *sūtras*. More study is needed of the relationship between the sorts of devotional understandings studied here and the basic Mahāyāna doctrines. Levering ("Scripture and Its Reception," 90–91) gives a brief but only preliminary discussion of this issue, based on some of the doctrines contained in the *Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna*.

87. In matters of dating and textual history I follow Gjertson, "The Early Chinese Buddhist Miracle Tale."

88. The character *xiang*^{ci} ("detail") in the title is probably an error for the *xiang*^{ci} ("sign") that also occurs in the title of *MXJ*. I translate accordingly.

- a. 志怪
- b. 經師
- c. 誦經
- d. 唱導
- e. 觀世音菩薩普門品
- f. 歡世音經
- g. 至心
- h. 至念
- i. 恆
- j. 一心
- k. 唯
- l. 請觀世音菩薩消伏毒害陀羅尼呪經
- m. 海龍王經
- n. 龍
- o. 舍利
- p. 法堂
- q. 佛坐
- r. 凡僧
- s. 存念
- t. 頂受
- u. 法印
- v. 合掌
- w. 得已
- x. 頂戴
- y. 若以頂戴, 兩肩荷負
- z. 何況讀誦受持之者, 斯人則為頂戴如來

- aa. 無量壽經
- ab. 精舍
- ac. 巫
- ad. 祝
- ae. 道士祭酒
- af. 章符
- ag. 胡神
- ah. 靈驗
- ai. 胡國
- aj. 胡人
- ak. 胡語
- al. 麾
- am. 胡書
- an. 乙
- ao. 己
- ap. 胡語
- aq. 驗其事
- ar. 舊胡
- as. 高座
- at. 神異
- au. 首楞嚴經
- av. 如來大夫
- aw. 便脫衣以囊經戴置頭上
- ax. 高座
- ay. 分身
- az. 師子座

- | | | | |
|-----|----------|-----|---------------|
| ba. | 于座內 | ca. | 小品般若波羅蜜經 |
| bb. | 唯事宰殺為志 | cb. | 曬經 |
| bc. | 講經文 | cc. | 道行般若經 |
| bd. | 鬼 | cd. | 紫磨 |
| be. | 鬼神無靈 | ce. | 省郎中 |
| bf. | 龍泉精舍 | cf. | 以為得性 |
| bg. | 大品 | cg. | 上清後生道君列紀 |
| bh. | 異苑 | ch. | 元始五老赤書玉篇真文天書經 |
| bi. | 虜 | ci. | 詳 |
| bj. | 匪 | cj. | 祥 |
| bk. | 觀無量壽佛經 | | |
| bl. | 無量壽經 | | |
| bm. | 頭上恆戴觀世音經 | | |
| bn. | 常 | | |
| bo. | 書 | | |
| bp. | 如來肩所荷擔 | | |
| bq. | 為如來手摩其頭 | | |
| br. | 幃 | | |
| bs. | 放火 | | |
| bt. | 放光 | | |
| bu. | 大涅槃經 | | |
| bv. | 舍利 | | |
| bw. | 帷 | | |
| bx. | 長齋 | | |
| by. | 八關齋 | | |
| bz. | 廣弘明集 | | |